TRAPPING AS A PROFESSION

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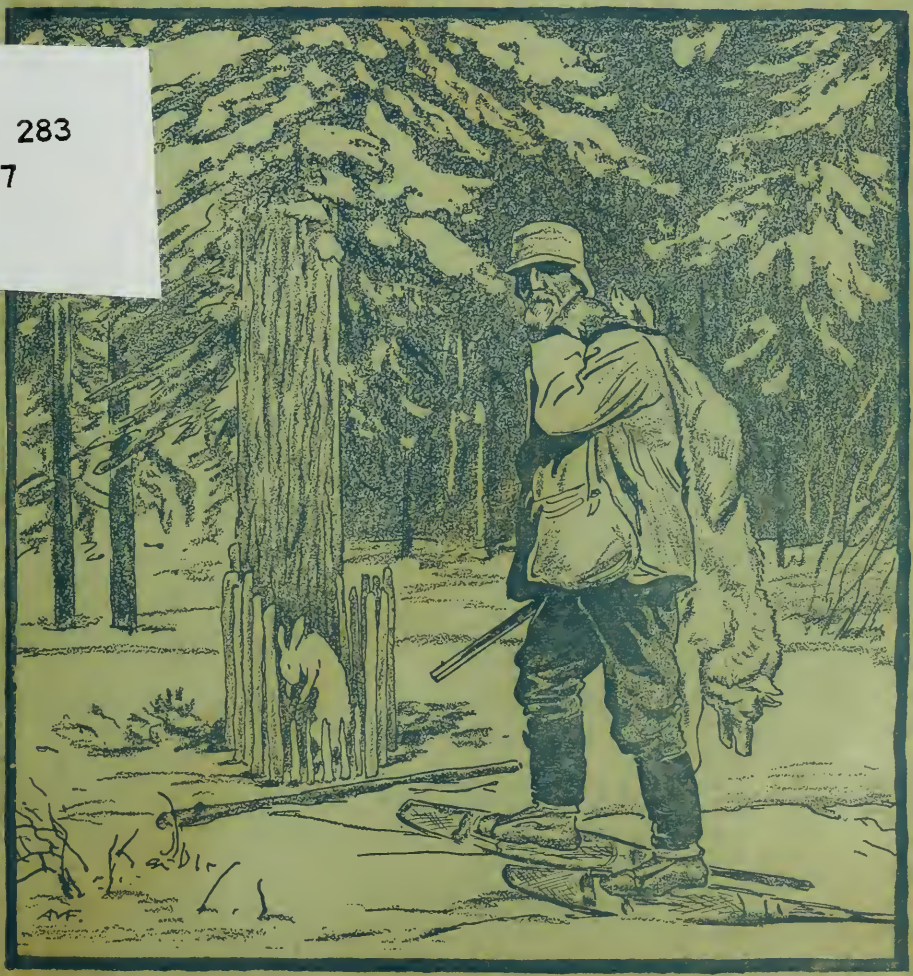

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TRAPPING AS A PROFESSION

Trapping Grounds of North America;
Guide to Methods of Trapping Them Successfully;
Fur Prospecting; Professional Trappers' Methods;
and Opportunities of Making Money
at This Profession

Published by
THE PELTRIES PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC.
370 Seventh Avenue, New York

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NOV 11 1922

TRAPPING GROUNDS OF NORTH AMERICA

A Guide to the Best Trapping Grounds of North America—How to Reach Them—What to Take—Typical Methods of Trapping and Making a Living in the Woods—Brief Account of the Writer's Trapping Experiences in the Tennessee Mountains, Maryland Marshes, Adirondacks, St. Lawrence River Valley and the Wilds of the Michigan Peninsular

By Dick Wood

THE aim of this booklet is to survey concisely the trapping grounds of North America, suggesting favorable localities and means of getting there and how to go about establishing trap lines and planning a winter's campaign. It is not a guide in the sense of a tourist's guide, which may feature conditions and places that do not vary from year to year. It is impossible to estimate accurately the abundance of game and fur bearing animals within a given locality, for the reason all wild animals constantly migrate to a varying extent. It is even more impossible to predict the game and trapping prospects for any appreciable period in the future. There are too many factors which must be reckoned with, besides others not antcipated. Some causes that will suddenly scatter or destroy game animals are invasions by lumbering companies, large hunting parties and homeseekers, the inauguration of an unwise game law which may nearly exterminate some particular bird or animal of value to the trapper, the migration of animals, periodically and for natural causes, diseases among rabbits and other prey of fur bearers, and more often weather conditions both past and for the duration of the trapping expedition.

What is meant by weather conditions affecting trapping results is that a dry season in the arid Southwest or plains States may have caused the game animals to migrate else-

where. An unusually wet season may fill all the streams to overflowing for months at a time, positively prohibiting trapping for water-frequenting animals. A severe winter in the northern districts almost invariably causes the fur bearers to remain holed up under ice, or denned up, thereby shortening the trapping season considerably. If the trapper is running long lines, weather conditions will also affect his ability to travel long distances in comparative safety and comfort. All these things and many more must be taken into consideration by the trapper who would "pull stakes" and move across several states, or even counties, into new fields, staking money and time on an increased profit over old grounds.

Perhaps the most difficult matter for the trapper to settle satisfactorily in his own mind is his ability to successfully plan and execute a trapping expedition in territory new to him. He should not tackle a greater proposition than he can handle, unless he is willing to gamble on results. There are many young trappers in the country who think they can suddenly change from farm lands trapping conditions to life in a Northern wilderness and make a big catch of valuable furs. Very few could do it, alone and unaided by an experienced partner.

The trapper should extend his territory or trapping experience gradually, working into grounds similar to his own. For instance, an Adirondack mountain trapper could make the change to the mountains of British Columbia, across the continent and make a better success than the average St. Lawrence trapper would in the Adirondacks. A plains trapper on the Texas Panhandle could have a certain measure of success on the plains of Manitoba, for the reason conditions would be somewhat similar. A Maryland marsh trapper might do equally well on a Michigan or Minnesota marsh, but he would be entirely lost in the Canadian bush.

Select the country you know well, either by personal prospecting, or by having closely read the experiences of other trappers and natives of the locality; or if going into country entirely new to you, it is advisable to arrange to go with an experienced native of the country, or one who has made successful trips into the locality.

THE PROFESSION OF TRAPPING

By Dick Wood

SINCE the days of the early fur traders, when beaver pelts were the medium of barter and exchange between trader and trapper, there has been an almost irresistable lure to follow the trail and trap line as a profession. In the old days when white man competed with red man, and fur bearers were abundant, trappers went into the wilderness in bands as a protection against the Indians. A few of the more brave went alone, or with a single companion, on long trips, subsisting mostly off the country by the aid of muzzle-loading rifles of unerring accuracy. In some sections of the country, these hardy adventurers became known as long hunters. In those days big fur catches were made by everybody, even with crude home-made traps and deadfalls. However, the prices realized were only a fraction of present day prices.

To-day wilderness conditions in this country and the Indians have about disappeared. But the fur bearers remain, most of them, and while not so abundant as in former years, yet raw fur prices have soared until a muskrat skin is worth as much as an otter used to fetch, and a fisher or cross fox may bring as much as a trapper's entire catch of fifty or a hundred years ago.

While conditions have changed, the prospects for making a living by trapping are as favorable as ever. Nor has any of the romance and lure of following a life in the open vanished. There are vast unexplored territories in the far North for the super-adventurous, and in the West and Rocky mountain wilderness conditions still obtain. In the northern ends of Michigan, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and even in portions of the Adirondacks, otter, beaver, fisher, bear and marten are to be found in varying numbers and the trapper may find places in these sections where he can spend an entire winter unmolested by "civilization." In the western states wolves are numerous and heavy bounties hang over their heads, resulting in profitable returns to expert trappers.

In the early days in this country there were many companies

that hired trappers by the year, especially in the western sections, which eliminated much of the speculation to "free-lance" trapping. This was before the days of the Government trappers. Now the depredations of wolves, bob cats, mountain lions, etc., to live stock have resulted in the Government regularly employing a corps of trappers at attractive salaries to trap. Many states' and ranchers' associations pay handsome rewards to free-lance trappers for the scalps of predatory animals; besides the skins are usually worth considerable money. The free-lance trapper can do as he pleases, usually can go where he likes and is unhampered by any rules excepting game laws, which are to his interests to observe. Many of the most expert trappers prefer to trap on " their own hook." On the other hand, inexperienced and young trappers will do well to "land" a job with the Biological Survey, which will teach them effective methods, put up the capital for an outfit and pay a specified salary.

The qualifications of the professional come in for consideration. The novice will naturally ask: When does the amateur merge into the professional? which is much easier answered than if he asked, When does the amateur cease to be a novice and becomes an expert? There is no sharp drawn line between the novice and expert trapper, but there is a distinction between the amateur and professional. Trapping as a profession means that the trapper depends entirely on this pursuit for his living, or income. Of course, allied occupations closely connected with trapping may be considered as part of the profession. The amateur trapper may depend on farming, or some other occupation for a living, and merely follow trapping in season for pleasure and what spare money it affords.

As to whether a person is qualified to follow trapping as a profession is a matter for the trapper's personal decision. While the expert trapper can make a good living during a season when furs are high, yet the game is uncertain at best. The amateur or novice may spend an entire season, working hard, and realize little more than expenses, in exceptional cases, for his labor. There are too many elements to be reckoned with to make trapping anything but a speculative pursuit, though not to the extent that prospecting for gold is

speculative. As a matter of fact, the experienced trapper on old grounds, can estimate closely as to what his catch will be during an ordinary winter. However, he cannot say just what the weather conditions will be, which to some extent affects trapping results, nor can he do more than conjecture at market prices of furs. So in a general way there is an element of speculation about trapping which just suits the nature of most men who follow the game year after year. A silver fox, a few otter or a "pocket" of marten, may mean the difference between ordinary wages and wages plus. A soaring market with a season's catch to sell may mean handsome returns for the effort spent in getting the furs. Then there is always the lure of greener fields elsewhere, beyond the next mountain range, in the next county, or state, or away into the far North beyond human trails. There is no limit to which the venturesome trapper may go in his search for the elusive and valuable fur bearers.

Having the spirit for venture, it is necessary that the trapper should have an insatiable longing for the out-of-doors, the silent places. The person who can not stand solitude will not make the best trapper. The fellow who doesn't take to the woods as a duck to water, who would not prefer to be in the woods or along a stream, in any kind of weather, to mingling in human society, had better stick close to his fellow men. It is not necessary that a trapper become a recluse, but he should prefer to be out of doors to any other place, and he should have open eyes and ears for everything that goes on in the open. It is not merely the monetary prospects that hold most trappers; it is the love of a free and healthy life in the wilderness, in a natural environment of wild animals, birds, plants, etc. The person who can not enjoy Nature is not cut out for a professional trapper.

There are two classes of professional trappers: The nomadic and the stay-at-home, and it is hard to tell which profits the more in the long run. The trapper who traps the same grounds year after year, comes to know all the popular runways, dens, streams, and practically every ant-hill in his territory. During the summer months he has the chance to observe the dens where the young are being raised, and new

runways and trails that may have been made, and when the season opens he is prepared to set his traps at once in the best places. However, unless he has unusually good grounds and little or no competition, the fur bearers are apt to become scarcer year after year. The writer knows a few expert old trappers who have practically cleaned out their territory.

The nomadic trapper always has the speculation of striking "fur pockets," or an untrapped section where fur bearers are abundant. If he travels far and wide, he may eventually reach a country where he will be satisfied to locate permanently, where the land is wild enough to produce a harvest of fur bearers each year to equal the number trapped off.

The wandering trapper must consider that it will take him the greater part of one season to thoroughly learn a country new to him. He may make good catches from the first, owing to the abundance of the animals, but he will make a much greater catch the second year, under similar circumstances. Besides much time will be consumed in building camps, establishing trap lines, prospecting for "signs;" and further, he will have to adjust his habits of living and his methods of trapping to fit the country. A Maryland marsh trapper would be lost in the Adirondacks, perhaps, and an Adirondack trapper would likely make a small catch his first year in the Rockies.

The writer's experience has been that about three years in one territory is advisable to thoroughly gauge the country's ability to produce a steady crop of fur bearers year after year. An ordinary prospecting trip, say in the early fall, will suffice to tell the observing and experienced trapper just how numerous the common fur bearing animals are in the vicinity, and whether it will pay him to trap for a winter. However, the second and third years will see a profit, to some extent, on the time spent in prospecting and extending trap lines.

Really, as to whether it pays a trapper to move his grounds every few years depends on the "wildness" of his grounds and how well the fur bearers hold their own, and of course, on how the trapper it situated and equipped for moving. The trapper who moves in long jumps, as do many trappers who use small cars, gets a varied experience, keeps a line on trapping conditions in different parts of the country, and in seasons

when certain furs attain unusually high prices, he is prepared to go after these particular furs exclusively. For instance, should fox come into big demand, down-state New York trappers, accustomed to catching muskrats and skunks, should be in the position and equipped to move to the Adirondack sections where these animals are quite common.

The monetary returns of trapping are of most interest to the young trapper. Visions of rich wilderness furs and silver foxes galore are apt to lure many young fellows away from home. When they do not get rich quickly by trapping ,and few if any trappers do, the ranks are considerably reduced. As insinuated in former paragraphs of this article, trapping is very much a labor of love, until one becomes an expert and well acquainted with one or several good territories, then he will have to work hard to make a living. Most experienced trappers will tell the amateur they do not follow the profession for the money there is in it, but mostly for the care-free and independent life. Who can be more independent than the trapper in a cabin built with his own hands far from civilization? A few provisions, traps, clothing and ammunition for his guns are about the only supplies he is dependent on civilization to supply, and these he can get in sufficient quantity at one trip "out" to last six months. Even clothing and food may be partly supplied by the gun and traps.

A trapping expert is authority for the statement that trappers' season's wages average under five hundred dollars, which is perhaps right. However, the writer knows one versatile Adirondack trapper who said he made nearly six thousand dollars the winter of 1919-20, when furs were so high. But he included profits on fur buying as a side-line, and commercial fishing through the ice of Lake Champlain. This trapper is an expert on foxes, catching fifty or sixty during the first two months of the trapping season; and he has trapped the same grounds for a number of years. He uses a small car and covers many miles of trap line. The car enables him to make long jumps between grounds in a minimum of time. He follows the state roads in the North woods, running lines through the foothills for foxes, skunk, 'coon and mink and in the marshes for muskrats. During the late fall and

early winter he camps back in the mountains and tends two or three one-day lines for fisher, 'coon, otter, bear, and other wilderness animals. When the ice breaks in the spring he is back onto Lake Champlain, where he has several hundred acres of marsh land leased. Here he traps for muskrats, early and late, using boats and perhaps two or three hired helpers. The mid-winter season is put in buying and selling furs and fishing through the ice. In the summer time he raises enough garden truck to last a year. The fish are shipped on order to Boston and New York markets. Such a versatile and expert traper can make a good living in any thinly settled part of the country during a year when furs are in good demand.

Another trapper known to the writer is located in the northern end of the Adirondacks in a locality that used to be well supplied with fur bearers. However, the activity of this far-ranging and expert trapper has about depleted some of the scarcer animals and greatly reduced numbers of the more common fur bearers. No doubt his roving nature would take him to more distant and wilder lands were he younger, but he is now well along in years. This trapper makes good wages, when not trapping, by guiding a wealthy New Yorker who has a summer camp near one of the Adirondack lakes.

Another Adirondack trapper uses a car and traps as many as half a dozen localities in one season. He keeps an accurate line on perhaps fifty square miles of territory and always has his traps working in season in the most productive grounds. During the entire trapping season he does nothing but tend traps and take care of the pelts, perhaps employing an assistant, if not on a partner arrangement with another trapper. During the summer he runs a cedar oil plant of his own construction. This trapper owns a small place and some land and thus cuts down his living expenses considerably, by eliminating rent and curtailing grocery bills, while enjoying country life much as would the average farmer. Yet this trapper wouldn't follow a plow two rounds in an acre lot, whereas he would walk ten miles to set a trap in a skunk den on equal speculation of catching a fifty-cent white skunk or nothing

against a black worth four or five dollars. Such is the trapper's calling.

A Tennessee acquaintance is a college graduate, an expert mathematician, a carpenter by trade and a trapper by calling. Like most trappers, when the leaves begin to fall and the frost primes up the furs, he drops his hammer and nails, regardless of wages, contracts or other things, and gets out the rusty traps, oils them and strings them along the creeks for muskrats and mink. Wages are secondary matters during the trapping season.

Trappers favorably located in the marsh sections of Maryland have made good money while muskrat furs were high. I mean by good money fifty to two hundred dollars a week during the two months' trapping season. This isn't an average Maryland trapper's income, rather the exceptional, but good trappers, who lease several hundred acres of marsh land and hire trappers to assist, can make better than ordinary wages any season.

Some of the middle western and far west trappers make good salaries or incomes trapping, poisoning and shooting wolves, and other predatory animals. One expert Michigan trapper confided to the writer that his average yearly earnings had varied around the twenty-five hundred dollar figure—but he is an old experienced trapper and hunter. He depends on his gun to a great extent in securing wolf scalps. His style of living necessitates expenses of not more than five hundred dollars, leaving a very attractive profit for the year's work.

Another trapper in the same locality put his earnings during a good year at fifteen hundred dollars. His mainstay was mink and beaver, and at the present writing there is a closed season on the latter animal in Michigan. The beaver is the easiest to catch of the more valuable fur bearers, and in a locality where they are abundant and not protected by law, this fur swells the trapper's income. In many cases beaver pelts equal in value the entire season's catch of other furs.

PROFESSIONAL TRAPPERS' METHODS

By Dick Wood

The methods of professional trappers are often a great source of mystery to young trappers. There are no secrets about how the old trappers make big catches of common fur bearers, or how they trap the sly, scarce animals, like the otter, beaver, wolf and fox. Invariably their success is due to a thorough knowledge of the habits of the animals, and to hard, persistent trapping. Trapping is not a lazy man's job. You cannot sit around a cabin stove and expect to catch a lot of furs. The most successful trappers are out on the trail and trap line all the time during open season, rain or shine, sleet or snow. Oftentimes they are out before daylight and do not get back home or to camp until after dark. They have to carry heavy loads of traps, or paddle a boat, walk many miles in "bad going," and altogether put in a harder day than the laborer on the farm. Yet the trapper lies down at night tired, but happy, and full of anticipation of what his traps may hold on the morrow. There is always the lure of finding new localities, of making a big catch, or trapping a scarce and valuable animal.

Many amateur trappers think the success of professional trappers is largely due to the use of a scent-lure composed of some secret ingredients unknown or unprocurable to the beginner. Old trappers do often use a scent bait of their own composition, which they guard closely in order to make the amateur think the secret of their success lies wholely in the use of the lure. These trappers are narrow-minded and selfish. They try to discourage young trappers because they fear or want to eliminate competition—want all the territory available for their own use. It is a fact some trappers can make a scent bait of proven merit, but there are no secrets about the ingredients used. The best ingredients for baits for various animals, as variously mixed by the most successful trappers, have been published time and again.

The success of many professional trappers is due in part to

holding a monopoly on good trapping grounds. Most old trappers, especially, do not like to have other trappers encroach on their grounds and usually are successful in keeping them off. If you feel your own immediate territory will not provide enough fur bearers to keep you busy skinning, when not tending traps, you should prospect around or extend your lines. Move into a good country and then stay there until it becomes known locally that you hold priority trapping rights.

One Day's Catch by Aaron Houghtaling, a Pennsylvania Trapper

THE FUR PROSPECTOR'S OUTFIT

By Dick Wood

THE thing most impressive about my first extensive wanderings in a semi-wilderness, was a sore back necessitated by toting enough sporting goods to equip an Arabian expedition for a month's journey in the Saraha. I had a partner whose ideas were to the opposite extreme. He insisted that a small fry pan, rifle and blanket were the only articles necessary for a protracted trip of exploration anywhere on the American continent. At first I accused him of being a shiftless, lazy cuss, but before the end of our trip I agreed with him to the extent that I was willing to go one better by discarding the blanket.

It takes considerable practice to arrive at the "happy medium" of what is necessary and what is superfluous in a hiking outfit. Everybody has peculiar personal ideas and whims for certain things not necessary even to live in civilization. Some men will err on the side of taking too little; others on the side of taking too much.

Two hardy trail men are capable of taking everything necessary for their comfort for two weeks, at least, if due care is exercised to select articles of minimum weight. Dailey and I last year went into an unsettled country fully equipped for a three weeks' stay and tools to build camps, besides two guns, and our packs only weighed about ninety pounds each. With plenty of game and fish, which we did get, we could have lived in comfort for a month. It is not necessary to eliminate all the comforts of life to take a trip into the back-packing country; neither is it advisable to make life miserable by toting too much junk.

An experienced trail man can carry forty to fifty pounds with ease day in and day out. An Algonquin Indian thinks nothing of carrying a couple of hundred pounds over a long portage without a rest. Wielding a hoe or pick, I would tire out, body and soul, within a short time, but after a few weeks getting in trim in the fall I can propel myself very rapidly under a hundred pounds of traps or deer meat and consider

sixty pounds a fair pack for hiking. Some of these go-light cranks claim they get a two weeks' hiking outfit down to thirty pounds, enumerating sundry articles of equipment besides rations, but I don't see how they do it. I would say forty pounds would be a safe estimate.

Whether a man takes much or little on the trail depends on his preferences and the object of the trip. If he is going into a sure game, berry and fish country, and has plenty of time, he can live almost an indefinite period on thirty or forty pounds of concentrated and properly selected "store" foods. On the other hand, if he is engaged in some duty that occupies all his time, or must arrive at a certain destination in a given time, his outfit and rations must be selected with utmost precision.

Most hiking trips are made for the purpose of prospecting, usually in the fall of the year. Trappers especially are accustomed to take a few days off prior to the trapping season and either look over their old trapping grounds or explore new ones.

The shelter problem is first to consider. If going into a snake, mosquito or insect infested country, a tent is almost necessary. For North woods travel late in the fall where weight must be cut, I should depend on brush shelters or "rock houses." Yet, a shelter tarpaulin made of balloon silk or similar light-weight material should not weigh more than three pounds and cost more than five or six dollars. Such an oblong sheet of tenting can be pitched into different forms of shelter, and erected in a moment's time.

Usually the out-door man is dressed in woolen clothing and a wetting does little harm, but for hiking in the fall, khaki or corduroy may be more desirable and in these clothes it is not advisable to get wet more than necessary when far from medical aid. For this reason the shelter tarpaulin or tent is more dependable than ax-made lean-to's. A lean-to requires time and care in making, not to mention experience if they are only fairly water-proof, and where evergreens do not grow, it is out of the question.

There is at least one compact tent on the market that weighs about six and a quarter pounds. A favorite tent is one that

Starting on the Trail

comes in two parts, each weighing about three and a half pounds, I believe. Where two men go together, as is usually the case, this is a very satisfactory tent. Each piece makes a fair lean-to type shelter, to be used individually if the parties get separated, and the two together make an "A" shaped tent.

The Compac tent is very practical for two hikers, and is absolutely bug and mosquito proof. It may be pitched with or without poles, and sleeps two in fair comfort. There is not standing room in the tent (quite unnecessary) and it is rather difficult to prevent touching the roof, which will bring the water through in a heavy rain.

Much care is necessary in selecting footwear. Personally, I wouldn't wear anything but Russell's Ike Walton boots for both comfort and protection. They cost a little more than ordinary store goods, but you get it back in service. Footwear should fit properly. Never make the mistake of trying to break in a pair of shoes on a trip. The moccasin style boot is most satisfactory for trail going.

Khaki or corduroy is noisy but otherwise satisfactory for woods use during the fall. Flannel shirts, light woolen underwear, and soft felt hat, if in open country, or cap for the woods, completes the clothing needs. A sweater may be taken, if necessary and serves for a pillow at night. A coat is useless in the woods; however, many men prefer a vest for its handy pockets.

Most any of the small cooking kits on the market will serve two persons on a hiking trip. The one I use is made for boy scouts and the quality is excellent. It is made of aluminum and weighs about two pounds, I believe.

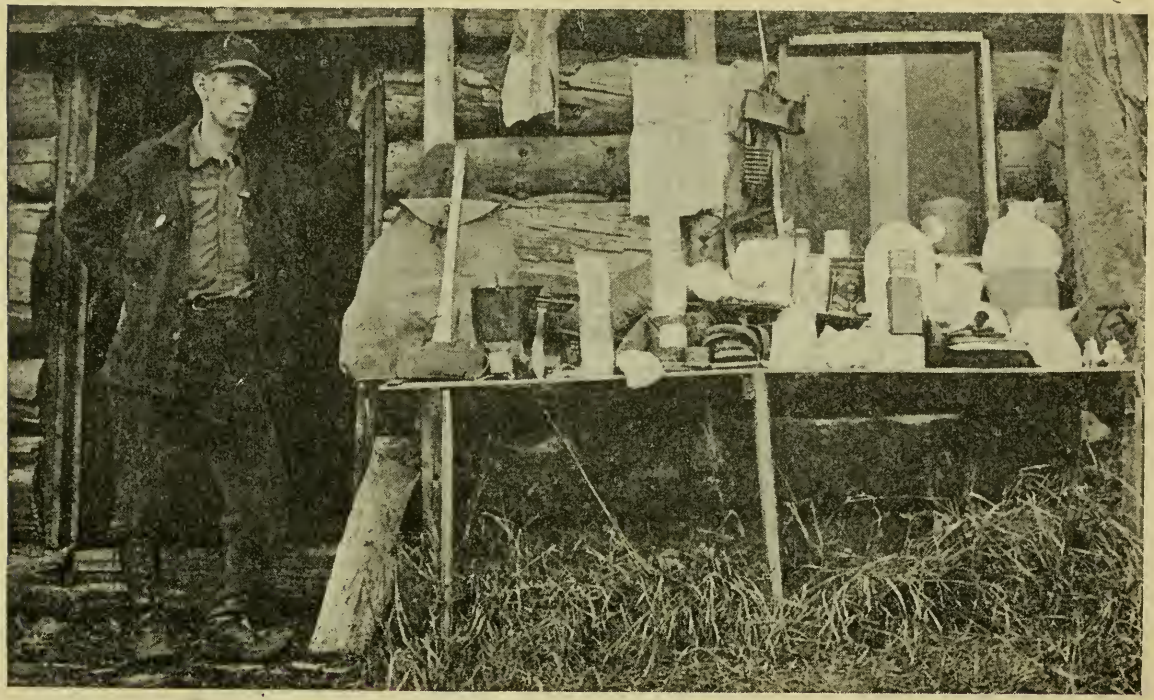
When a trip is taken by car, boat or wagon, we can take along hams, beef, potatoes, cabbage or most anything a finicky appetite may dictate. But when it must all be carried on the back day after day, until consumed, the food question is not one to be solved at the point of purchasing over the grocery counter. One should know something of relative food value of various foodstuffs, proper cooking (if not scientific), and "balanced rations." When it comes to food, I am like a lot of old trail fellows, I can live indefinitely on flapjacks and bacon. But I do know from experience that this old trail gag

won't keep a man in the best health. Somehow or other strenuous outdoor life develops such a voracious appetite the same thing may be eaten day after day without tiring of it. Yet the food may not be balanced or sufficiently nutritious so that the insatiable appetite is a direct warning the body is not properly fed.

Herewith is the food list I used last year for a two weeks' trip for two men. Owing to so much game and fish, at the end of the two weeks it seemed we had as much as when we started. The rice and pancake flour, I believe, were running short. The crisco was unnecessary, as we used bacon grease for cooking. It gives an excellent flavor to the food.

Pancake prepared flour	10	lbs.
Bread flour	5	lbs.
Corn meal	2	lbs.
Sugar	5	lbs.
Tea	½	lb.
Coffee	2	lbs.
Salt	1	lb.
Pepper	2	ozs.
Crisco	1	lb.
Butter	3	lbs.
Baking powder	¾	lb.
Bacon	6	lbs.
Raisins	2	lbs.
Sweet chocolate	1	lb.
Onions	2	lbs.
Evaporated fruit	2	lbs.
Prunes	2	lbs.
Beans	2	lbs.
Rice	3	lbs.
Milk	8	tins
Syrup	2	pints

In a pinch for light weight I could cut this list some, but the foods listed are necessary for good health. Fruits should be taken evaporated; also a dehydrated vegetable would be desirable. The raisins and sweet chocolate are excellent foods for munching on the trail, and there is no other food that will



Outfit for a Two Weeks' Hike in the Wilderness

keep a man going so long. Cheese and macaroni are two valuable concentrated foods, but are not always practical for trail use. Rice supplies everything that is in potatoes and is not nearly so bulky and heavy. Baker's powdered egg is excellent for cooking purposes, but can be dispensed with.

One or two wool blankets on a bed of balsam boughs makes an excellent bed, with the sweater for a pillow. A six-ounce air pillow can be taken for the tenderfoot. In the South, where rattlesnakes and copperheads are a menace, I use a light hammock, swinging it several feet off the ground.

In the ditty bag, so named, I believe, by that pioneer of go-light trail, "Nessmuk," should be enclosed odds and ends deemed necessary. A tooth brush, hair comb or brush, towel, cake of tar soap, and dish rag should be included. A small sewing kit, needle and thread, if nothing else, often proves extremely useful. Candles should not be forgotten; and matches should be added to the food list so as not to be overlooked. Put them in two different waterproof containers, one to be carried in the pocket. A compass is necessary if you know how to use it. Topographic maps are invaluable. Another necessity is a belt ax. In every ditty bag will usually be found some article not necessary but inseparable from its owner. It may be a Jew's harp or a glass of jelly; mine is a volume of Service's poems, "Rhymes of a Rolling Stone."

The gun can be left at home, but is usually taken. Would suggest one weighing not over six pounds; and a .22 Colt's pistol serves my purpose on the trail from killing grouse to deer.

This, briefly, about covers the essentials of the hiking trip outfit, from memory. Of course, at the last moment one will want to stick in several articles not thought of before. One may be a small steel trap, if in trapping season, and would certainly pay for its cartage. If camps are to be built, one must figure on the weights of tools. An ax and saw, one-man type, and nails would build a camp, but a 25-foot tape, drawing knife, hinges, staples and small plane are usually worth taking in. Two men going together cuts the weight of the outfit quite materially. One man could hardly carry more

than a two weeks' food supply along with the other necessary items of the outfit.

It is advisable to keep a note book and list the articles found necessary on the trail and check off those that can be discarded. Also make notes on game signs, fur signs, ore prospects, or whatever you are after, get it down on paper. When moving to new scenes each day it is mighty easy to forget what you saw yesterday. What's the use of going if you don't learn something?

On the Trap-line After a Fresh Fall of Snow

ADIRONDACKS

Their Location—Accessibility—Game Conditions—Laws Affecting Trapping and Prospects for the Trapper of To-day

By Dick Wood

THE Adirondacks cover over five thousand square miles in New York State, located mostly in the northern part of the State. Since the days of the pioneers, "Nick" Stoner and "Nat" Foster, the Adirondacks have proved a permanent source of income to the aggressive trapper. The high altitude insures furs of good quality, as well as a long season, and the rugged mountains have kept the country from being thickly settled, although in a general way the game laws keep the wild animals protected from total annihilation.

The fur bearers found in varying numbers in the Adirondacks are fox, mink, otter, raccoon, fisher, marten, weasel, lynx, beaver, muskrat, skunk, and bear. Foxes are very abundant in some localities; lynx and marten are very scarce even in localities most conducive to their habitation. Fisher are not numerous anywhere, but this animal is yet to be found in quite a few different parts of the mountains. Wolverines and wolves are practically unknown in these mountains, although Lute Trim, a trapper near Bear Mountain, twenty miles south of Malone, caught a wolf the winter of 1919. This one no doubt had strayed over from Canada. There haven't been any wolverines in the State for years. In 1846 DeKay, State naturalist, wrote that beavers were almost extinct, as the result of incessant trapping. Later they became even scarcer. In 1905 a few pairs were liberated in northern Hamilton and Herkimer counties, and protected by law. To-day there are thousands of beaver in the Adirondacks, still protected. Skunk are scarce in the mountains, and muskrats are not abundant.

Foxes are not protected in New York State, so that one can begin trapping them just as soon as the fur becomes prime, which is about the 20th of October in the northern part.

Anyway, the trapper should have his trap lines established and everything in readiness by the first of November, when most fur bearers are prime. In the settled sections the trapper can not set out his traps before the season actually opens without being suspected of violating the laws. Then he may lose a few days in getting his traps placed. Muskrat, otter and bear may be trapped until well into May, so far as primeness is concerned, without securing "springy" pelts. Therefore the Adirondack trapper has a six months' season in which he can operate to advantage.

The prospects for making money trapping in the Adirondacks are fairly good. I know of several trappers who seem to be making a good thing of it. One of my former partners told me he made six thousand dollars trapping, fishing and dealing in furs, one winter during the high fur prices about 1918. But this is exceptional; the trapper who makes one thousand dollars in a season is doing unusually well. By far the greater number of trappers' catches do not exceed five hundred dollars in value. But what is true of the monetary returns of trapping is general and not confined to the Adirondacks; except, perhaps, the element of luck connected with trapping in the North where silver foxes are to be found. Here one skin may be worth the average winter's catch.

From three years of personal experience trapping in these mountains in different localities each time, and after having met and talked with some of the best trappers, I should say the following would be considered a "good" catch even by an old experienced trapper: Two dozen mink, 12 marten, if in marten country (in most sections of the mountains there are no marten), 6 fisher, 2 otter, 50 foxes (reds; there are very few greys in the Adirondacks), 12 raccoon, 50 weasels, 50 muskrats, 1 lynx and 1 bear. This is about the average catch by the older and more experienced trappers who have lived all their lives in the Adirondacks and control all the territory they can handle. It is not an average catch for Adirondack trappers as a whole.

The question as to whether there is an open territory for trapping in the Adirondacks may be answered in the affirmative. However, "free" ground is scarce and to locate a suit-

able site it is almost necessary either to prospect the country, or depend on a native's or friend's word who has seen the grounds and knows what they will produce in the fur line. A combination deer hunting and fur prospecting trip in the fall is a mighty good plan, as well as an enjoyable outing.

A special trip for looking up a trapping ground is always the best plan if one can spare the time. A small tent of the "Compac" type is very handy for a trip into mosquito-infested country—and there are mosquitos in much of the Adirondack territory until late in the fall. Such a tent should not weigh more than five pounds and will shed an ordinary shower. A heavy rain will beat a spray through and let a small stream through if touched on the inside of the roof. A lean-to style tent (merely an oblong sheet of water-proof material) makes a good shelter, especially for cool nights when a fire is desirable. The fire can be built in front of the shelter cloth, which will deflect the heat upon the persons lying between the cloth and fire. These shelter tents are not necessary, by any means, but if procured in extremely light-weight material, the weight can be saved in blankets alone to the greater comfort of the camper.

If you want to go extremely light, I see no reason why an experienced outdoorsman should need more than a light gun with ammunition for same, some salt, bread material, tea and teapot, compass, match safe, knife, belt axe, skillet, cup and blanket. Such an outfit packed in a knapsack, sufficient for a two weeks' to a month's trip, should weigh less than thirty pounds. A shelter can be constructed in a short time with an axe of evergreen bushes or bark, and one wool blanket and a fire will keep a person warm on cool fall nights, even in the high mountains. The person who is willing to rough it in the manner described can cover a great deal of territory and will not be hampered by too much dunnage, thus facilitating the inspection of isolated places.

The Government topographic maps are an indispensable aid in locating trapping grounds. First select a likely looking section on a big map, or if already informed of a locality, write the Director, United States Biological Survey, Washington, D. C., for a list of the mapped sections in the particular State

you are interested in, and order from this State map. They cost 10c each.

The next thing to consider is the permanent camp for the winter. This brings up the question, Can a person build a camp anywhere in the Adirondacks? The State law says he can not build on State land. This law must be observed, otherwise the State wardens will burn the cabin. It takes quite an experienced outdoorsman to make a tent inhabitable an entire winter in a country where it gets down to thirty below zero and snows four feet deep, but it can be done. Even with a tent there are some restrictions to be observed. The best plan is to arrange to occupy an abandoned log drivers' camp. The lumber companies remove the roofs of their camps, when they abandon them. However, the trapper can often find a camp that is located on private land or a lumber company camp that has been repaired by deer hunters. He may even prefer to live in a village near his trapping grounds, which is perhaps the best method in the mid-winter season. In the early winter a tent may be used.

Clothing is a subject that confronts the southern trapper when he first comes north. There is one best method to follow: Buy your clothing at the last village. This will insure good quality woolen clothing, such as the lumberjacks buy for their use. Snowshoes, snowshoe pacs, a dozen heavy wool socks, mackinaw suit, cap to match with ear protectors, wool mits is about the type of winter clothing. Some trappers make good use of a toboggan in winter trapping. If in the big woods, a few tools, saw and good axe will be necessary. However, the reader of this booklet should consult past numbers of F. N. & O. W. for articles on trapping outfits and methods of trapping, or other good sources.

Trapping methods are outside of the scope of this article, but suffice to say steel traps are usually employed, from fifty to a hundred to the trapper, and cubby pens generally built for all land animals. These pens are usually made in hollow snags high off the ground for fisher and marten, otherwise they would snow under. Mink, otter and water animals live and can best be trapped under the snow and ice in midwinter.

The writer will give a brief summary of his three winters spent in the Adirondacks. My first trip was arranged by getting in touch with a trapper who lived in a village on Lake Champlain. He was sixty-five years old and had trapped practically all his life in the foothills of the Adirondacks. However, for a certain period of each season, he goes well back into the mountains. The foothills are generally more productive of some valuable fur bearers, including foxes, skunk, raccoon and muskrats. Otter, fisher and marten are only to be found in the far-back places, and of course, they are scarce and hard to trap.

I spent the best part of the season with this trapper, back in the Boreas river country, forty miles from the Lake Champlain village. We used a Ford car to get back to camp, but it was of no further use to us, as we had to "run" our trap lines by boat and on foot. The trapper was an expert and averaged a fox a day for the duration of the trip, which lasted until the snow drove us out. Several raccoons were taken, a couple of otter, some mink, muskrats, and I think, a fisher or two. Deer hunters get into this country in the hunting season; in fact, they get to every place in the Adirondacks where there are both deer and roads, and even quite a ways from the latter. There are a few hunting camps scattered throughout this section of the woods, especially around Lake Henderson, several miles west of Boreas river. There are a great many small lakes and ponds in the section we were in, which insures a retreat for water animals. Farther north for many miles is good trapping country.

My second trip was with a trapper who lives on Racquette Lake. We went back into the untraveled woods for about fifteen miles. There was quite a sprinkling of fisher in this country, and the usual number of otter. Beaver were numerous, but protected by law. My partner caught about twenty mink, three fishers, more than a dozen raccoons, a few foxes (this animal was abundant), and other less valuable furs. This was the early winter catch.

The next winter I went to Malone, in the northern part of the Adirondacks, and took the mail stage coach for twenty miles to a trapper's house near Bear Mountain. I hit in here

A View in the Adirondacks Near Cold River, About Twenty Miles From a Settlement

the wrong season (mid-winter) to see many furs taken, but foxes were fairly numerous and the trapper had been accustomed to bringing out to Malone each winter some good catches. The following winter he caught a wolf. There was an undue scarcity of fur bearers near this trapper's grounds, which was an indication of his ability to pinch their toes in steel traps.

I spent two seasons in St. Lawrence country, but this is out of the Adirondacks proper. Some of it might be called foothills country. Foxes, raccoon, weasel, skunk and muskrats were very numerous, and I made more money trapping in this settled country than I ever did anywhere. We used a car, which enabled us to get over a great deal of territory. We would go to a big marsh and set out a hundred traps for muskrats, tend them a week, or until the catch began to fall off, then we would move to fresher grounds. Skunk and muskrat furs were high that year and we practically specialized in the trapping of these animals, making good money for the first month of the season. Soon as the marshes froze up, we devoted considerable time to foxes and weasel. The latter animal was numerous, and at one to three dollars each was an important source of revenue with trappers. The weasel is one animal that moves the entire winter, and some trappers run extensive weasel lines in mid-winter when other fur bearers are holed up or living under the ice-bound streams and ponds.

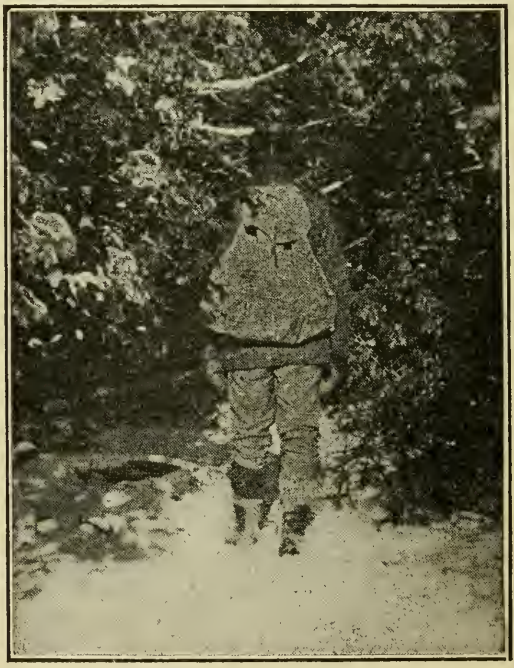
I had always desired to spend a winter in a real wilderness and decided such a place might be found in the Adirondacks. I selected the country around the headwaters of Cold river, forty miles from the outfitting village of Tupper lake. Via Tupper lake and Ampersand is the only practical route into this country. I found two localities (on a prospecting trip in the fall) about thirty miles apart that harbored quite a bunch of marten. One local trapper reported catching twenty some odd marten a few seasons previously. Mink were fairly numerous, there were some otter, and foxes were plentiful, as they generally are in the Adirondacks. However, the country was not the "trappers' paradise" it had been reported to me by a French-Canadian trapper who had been with a lum-

bering company in the country about twenty years previous. I located an abandoned river drivers' camp, and improvised some line camps and spent several weeks in the best part of the season between Moose Pond and Seward Mountain. I did not see a human being during the trip except lumberjacks at a camp about six miles off my route, where I went for supplies when my stock of some things got low. I had two partners with me, but they took cold feet when it began to snow every day, and their snowshoes wore out, and deserted, leaving a loaded toboggan on the trail at the foot of a mountain range which had to be crossed to get out of the country. I stuck it on alone for several weeks and made a fair catch of furs. However, the severe winter weather interfered greatly with the success of the trip. The animals stayed denned up or under ice. When spring suddenly made its appearance, trapping became almost an impossibility. Foxes, especially, began to move about nightly, but the snow would melt during the day-time and freeze at night. Sets in the open became an impossibility, and soon traveling became almost impossible. My snowshoe lacing rotted in the slush and fell apart. The sharp rocks in the high mountain peaks where I had my marten lines cut my snowshoes so badly I had to abandon the lines at the best part of the season. The weather finally drove me out, as it became unprofitable to stay longer.

In a general way, figuring the average trapper's collection worth about five or six hundred dollars, the Adirondacks are still a good trapping country. It is doubtful whether any particular spots in the unsettled localities are better than others. If fisher and marten are to be found in one place, skunk and muskrats are apt to be very scarce. When it comes to dollars and cents, the trapper who lives in a small village or farm house in the foothills is likely to make as much money as the far-back wilderness trapper—although the Adirondacks can hardly be called a wilderness.

There is a month or two of mid-winter weather that almost prevents profitable trapping in the mountainous sections of the Adirondacks. Very few furs are caught in these mountains during January, and few trappers want to experience the

exposure in the weather. The trappers down in the foothills, where it doesn't snow so deep, can at least keep a weasel line going, and make a few dollars, while the mountain trapper can only sit in the cabin and feed the box stove and curse the weather, if he doesn't like it.



Running a Trap-line in a Northern Bog

SOUTHERN TRAPPERS' METHODS

Fur-bearers Native to the South—How Trapped—And Some of the Problems the Southern Trapper Must Contend With

By Dick Wood

The writer's first trapping was done in the mountains of Tennessee and Virginia. "Poling" a boat up the rapid mountain streams tending a mink and muskrat trap line, and tramping the hills for skunk and opossum, are among my earliest recollections.

There is much to commend trapping in the southern end of the Allegheny Mountains and in Florida and in Louisiana, but there are not many inducements for the professional trapper to enter other portions of the Southeast for the purpose of making a living by trapping. The trapper from a distance will not always find a welcome even in the districts mentioned, especially in the mountains, and if he is a "Yankee." Natives sometimes enjoy very good trapping grounds in a locality favorable to trapping. A native trapper can move a few miles across into another county or perhaps over a state line, and readily adapt themselves to existing conditions. The stranger, however, will not find the welcome he may expect to meet with in the North and West, where fur bearers are more numerous and to a great extent considered predatory. Most of the southern states have game laws that are unfavorable to the trapper and partial to land owners. It is the farmers and dog owners who are particularly opposed to trapping. In some sections they make it very uncomfortable for the trappers. It is to be regretted some of the North woods "outlaw" trappers do not get down into some of these sections and teach the natives to respect trappers' rights!

In the mountainous sections of Tennessee, North Carolina and Virginia, furs become prime about the 15th of November and remain so until around the first or middle of February. December is usually an ideal month for trapping in these sections. The weather is invarioubly cool enough to be

pleasant and to prime the furs. Later the rainy season begins, generally in January, and the streams may become so swollen with high waters as to make trapping out of the question, except for land animals.

Even the most expert trappers do not make big catches in this locality. When mink and otter are fairly numerous and in demand, an experienced trapper can make money on these furs, if he is also alert to cash in on opossum, mink, raccoon and muskrats at the same time. The red fox is very scarce and not of much value to the trapper; besides to trap them would be to antagonize the "dogmen," who want them reserved for their favorite sport of fox running. The grays are fairly numerous in some sections, but the pelts are of little value and not worth the effort necessary to make a success of trapping them.

In many of the mountain sections the fur bearing animals are about exterminated, owing to the expertness of the natives with the rifle and to the number of stray hounds loose. Generally it will prove more profitable to locate along a stream, where you can use a boat and trap for both land and water animals. The usual boat is the ordinary skiff about fourteen feet long. They may be bought on the ground for a few dollars, or a man with the time and skillful with tools can make his own. A good waterproof tent and camping outfit can be used the entire winter, and such an outfit may be moved easily in a skiff.

About one hundred traps of assorted sizes from No. 1 to No. 2, or No. 3, if trapping for otter, will suffice for the professional trapper. In the fall muskrats are easily trapped. The banks of rivers and creeks will be marked every few feet with their slides; and where the animals are numerous, they make regular paths from the banks into corn fields and orchards. They live in burrows in the banks, as experienced trappers know. The best time to trap the muskrats is in late fall and mid-winter. Later the high waters will do away with this end of the game. However, do not begin trapping before the pelts are sufficiently prime to grade as "winters." If you do, you will catch a large proportion of "kits," of little value, and diminish the next season's crop.

Opossum are generally numerous and easily trapped or taken with dogs by hunting at night. Their skins are only worth a dollar or two, but three and four a night may be taken, and if there are other furs to help out the catch, the trapper is making better than wages. Skunk are not so numerous, but run well to blacks in most sections. Mink are found in varying numbers. Weasels are of no value. Otter are found only in "pockets," or the most remote sections, excepting for an occasional wandering "stray." Raccoon are actually numerous in some places and afford the staple catch.

Game is very scarce, unless squirrels may be excepted. They are usually plentiful, both grays and fox. Quail are common. Turkeys and pheasants are scarce; wild ducks are fairly common in the well watered sections; geese are common along the large rivers. Deer and bear are only found in the most unsettled parts of the country, and such places are invariably too mountainous or swampy for human habitation.

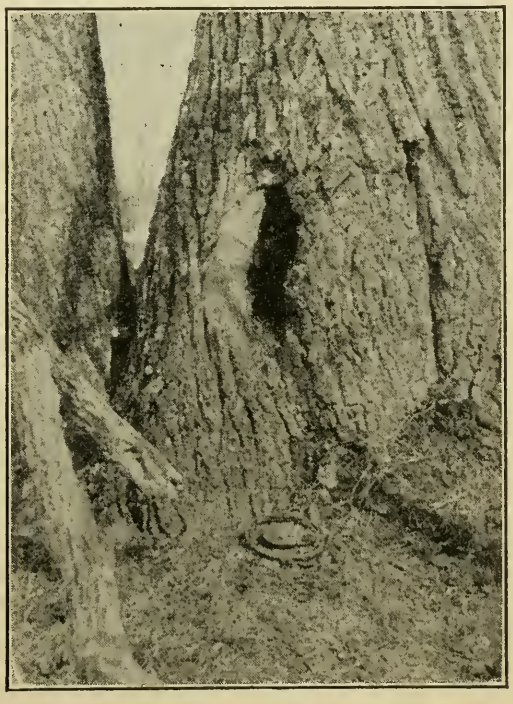
The tyro might think that localities as far south as Mississippi and Florida would not be conducive to profitable trapping, and while there are no valuable fur bearers in these sections, still some of the natives make good money trapping. Mink, muskrats and raccoons seem to be the main catch. The two latter animals are especially numerous in some of the Mississippi and Louisiana marshes and here trappers can make some large catches, which may make up for what is lacking in the quality of the fur. A Northerner going south to trap in the marshes, as many do, owing to the comparative ease of traveling down the Mississippi river, will run up against a type of people new to him, perhaps. Many of the natives speak French, or a mixed dialect.

There are a few places in Florida where trapping may be engaged in profitably. Mink, raccoon and otter are the fur animals to be depended upon, the 'coon being especially numerous in places. Some of the islands along the coast afford good trapping. One trapper recently reported that 'coons were especially abundant, and attain a large size because of their clam diet.

The southern trapper does not have to worry about clothing or other expensive equipment necessary to trapping in the far

North. Any old clothes will suffice; perhaps khaki is good as anything. One should have a waterproof suit, rubber boots, and a small boat suitable for getting through the bayous. A tent and camping outfit may be used, or one can depend on finding shacks or other shelter.

Besides the small fur animals, there is always the speculation of adding a few otters to the winter's catch, and in the canebrakes the hunter can have some sport with black bears and wild hogs. On the whole there are many inducements for putting in at least one season in the Southern trapper's camp.



A Set for 'Coon at a Den Tree

MUSKRAT MARSHES

By Dick Wood

MARSH trapping conditions are similar in different parts of the country, but undoubtedly Maryland produces more muskrats than any other state. I spent two seasons in Maryland marshes, trapping and duck shooting, and several months on St. Lawrence river marshes, a season on Lake Champlain marshes, and have seen marshes around the Great Lakes in Ohio, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Ontario. Maryland produces better muskrat skins than Minnesota and Wisconsin, but St. Lawrence river 'rats grow the largest and best pelts. Some of these marshes are very conducive to muskrat growth, and if not too closely trapped, and food remains plentiful, the 'rats may become exceedingly abundant. Marsh 'rats generally build houses out of grass cuttings and mud, and it is a common practice to reckon the number of muskrats in a marsh by the number of inhabited houses, especially new houses. I think four or five 'rats may be reckoned to the house.

Marsh trapping, especially in salt water marshes, is very disagreeable work. In salt water marshes, the tides interfere with trapping, so that the lines must be tended for certain periods of something like two to four hours, otherwise the average man would not care to stand the gruelling work all day long. Occasionally a marsh may be shallow and fairly firm on the bottom, in which case walking is comparatively easy. More often the marshes are knee deep and full of holes and quagmires, which the trapper must constantly watch for to prevent getting a ducking in slimy, black mud, and some marshes are even dangerous. Most trappers know their own marsh grounds and have accustomed routes; after thus getting acquainted with the marsh, the trapper can make good time going through it. All bottomless or deep holes should be marked with a rail or bush.

When high muskrat fur prices prevailed in 1919, the remuneration of marsh trapping attracted many trappers and con-

A Marsh Trapper Running His Line

siderable general public interest. Quite naturally the prospective marsh trapper wants to know what marsh land costs, or where he may find marshes free to trappers and what are the possible rewards of this specialized trapping. There is not much marsh land along the Atlantic coast that isn't privately owned or under lease by trappers. Muskrat farming is an old and recognized profitable industry in Maryland, Delaware and New Jersey, and the eastern coast of Virginia. A trapper must either own his own marsh or lease it. Some of the most productive marshes sell high; in the old days when muskrat skins were only worth ten cents, the marshes were considered waste land and sold for a song. I know some trappers who bought Maryland marsh land from the Government for thirty cents and a little better per acre, which in 1920 was producing an income of as many dollars per acre, during the two months' season.

By writing to several informed people in marsh sections, a trapper might locate some free ground and visit it to determine if muskrats were numerous enough to warrant trapping. However, in the coast states a person may expect to have to lease his marsh. The contract may be on shares, or may call for a specified amount for a year or several years. As a marsh good enough to lease insures an experienced trapper fair returns, he may make more profit on the investment than if he located free-for-all ground and had to compete with other trappers. There is seldom any poaching on leased marshes. In some localities marshes are not leased, or if so, for very small sums, and the trapper can do well in such places if the competition is not too keen and 'rats are numerous.

Clothing and outfits don't bother the marsh trapper much. He will need a good pair of hip rubber boots, perhaps a slicker or shower-proof suit and about one hundred steel traps. Some trap manufacturers are making traps specially designed for muskrat trapping in marshes. It is advisable to try out these brands and select the most efficient. The muskrat is very difficult to hold in the ordinary trap, when caught in shallow marshes, where they twist the chain around a bunch of grass and eventually twist a foot off. Some marsh trap-

Making a Set for a Muskrat Near Its House in a Marsh

pers prefer to use a six-inch cord instead of the regulation chain; but I have seen the cords broken and both trap and 'rat gone. The trap problem is very important as the trapper not only loses the pelt value of an escaped 'rat, but several crippled 'rats may alarm a whole colony so they may leave the marsh entirely. Besides many crippled 'rats become infected in the dirty marsh water and die as the result of a foot lost in a trap.

Traps may be set in the form of a circle in a marsh, or follow the general course of a stream, or in any way practical. The main object is to arrange them so the ground will not be covered twice. Invariably a marker must be used to guide the trapper to his sets; otherwise he would never find all of them. Some trappers use long sticks with a bit of rag tied to the top. They set these up six to ten feet away from the set and incline the top toward the trap. Marsh 'rats soon become sly enough to avoid these markers. If a small green limb or sprout is used, it will serve for both trap stake and marker.

Traps are set in the runways or "leads" made in the high grass and muck by the 'rats. The average marsh is intersected with these leads, some underground, with exits in the banks of streams, others above ground in plain sight. These runs must not be stepped in or noticeably disturbed in a hard-trapped marsh, as such carelessness will alarm the 'rats.

The trapping season lasts about two months in Maryland, and perhaps somewhat longer in adjoining states. This information varies each year and may be obtained up-to-date from the states' conservation commissions. During the open season the trappers must work hard most of the day and perhaps skin the catch at night. The carcasses are usually sold for food at prices varying from ten to twenty cents each. I have known marshes to produce several thousand muskrats, and trappers who made enough money during the two months' season to live on the rest of the year. But such cases are exceptional.

In the Northern states, the seasons are generally longer, but perhaps the average 'rat catch is smaller than the two months' catch in the Atlantic coast states for the following reasons: The ponds, lakes and marshes freeze over early in

A Tidewater Creek in a Maryland Marsh

the season, which almost stops muskrat trapping. The law prevents trapping in the houses, and in some states as near as six feet to them. And in Northern New York, Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan, the best of the northern muskrat sections, the ice may not break up until so late in the spring that the furs will have become unprime. So far as the muskrat crop goes, not considering other furs, I should prefer to chance Virginia coast rather than the states that border onto Canada, especially for establishing a muskrat ranch. Sometimes an unusually severe winter in the North almost wipes out whole marshes of 'rats.

Then there is the quality of the furs to be taken into consideration. Compare raw fur dealers' quotations on skins from different sections, although there are other factors to be taken into consideration, such as the percentage of papery hides and blacks. Some years blacks seem to be in bigger demand than brown furs, and command slightly higher prices. Maryland skins run a high percentage black, and some progressive ranchers have bred them up to a very high percentage. The skins are always of better quality in sections where the muskrats have an abundance of food, especially clams and aquatic plants, and plenty of sun light. In the far northern sections of Canada, and even Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan Peninsular the skins are much more poorly furred than New York and Maryland skins.

Louisiana is one of the big muskrat states and offers an opportunity for free-lance trappers. The furs are less valuable than northern skins, but the catch is generally sprinkled with swamp 'coons and mink. The competition is to a great extent negroes and natives of French descent, and general marsh conditions prevail, excepting for the difference in climate. Some of the big lumber companies lease trapping grounds; others hire trappers, especially to trap along levees and dams.

Muskrat trapping is a specialty and one which is as remunerative and speculative as far North trapping where silver foxes are occasionally caught.

THE UPPER PENINSULAR COUNTRY

By Dick Wood

UNDOUBTEDLY the western end of the Upper Peninsular of Michigan and portions of Wisconsin and Minnesota remains to-day the best trapping grounds left east of the Mississippi river. Just as the Adirondacks are sufficiently inaccessible to protect a few colonies of fur bearers in the extreme east, affording much better trapping than does either Maine, the White and Green mountains of New England, or the Alleghenies, so does this semi-wilderness territory touching three states and Canada offer the enterprising trapper a field for profitable professional trapping far superior to the Adirondacks, in a general way.

However, this statement is made with the reservation that it refers to the states or localities where beaver trapping is permitted. The year 1921 brought a closed season on beaver in Michigan, and as this animal on the average afforded about fifty per cent. of the trapper's income, the restriction means a considerable change in trapping prospects. Beavers are actually numerous in many parts of the Adirondacks, and to open the season on this animal in these mountains, without restrictions, would give the Eastern trappers as good an opportunity as the Middle Western trappers now enjoy.

Fox trapping seems to be more profitable in the Adirondacks, but this condition is considerably over-balanced by the fact there are wolves and coyotes to trap in the North Woods country, considering the liberal bounties paid for these predatory animals. The latter-mentioned animals are not found in the Adirondacks.

The writer has found the fisher and marten to be more numerous in some portions of the Adirondacks than in the particular localities of the middle west visited by him, but the presence of lynx and bob cats in the latter locality counteracts this advantage.

Summing conditions up, taking into account the indefinite

closed season on the beaver in the Adirondacks, those of the three states under discussion which have an open season on this animal will afford the trapper a better opportunity than the best Eastern trapping ground. Bears and otters are fairly well distributed in the sparsely settled districts of the country. The smaller fur bearers, such as the mink, weasel, raccoon and muskrat are abundant locally commensurate with conditions favorable to their habitation. The muskrat is seldom numerous in a mountainous country, nor are their furs so valuable as in farming lands. The same may be said of the skunk. The mink is found in most all well watered localities.

The trapper can go into the North Woods country, as the Peninsular-Wisconsin-Minnesota locality is called, any time during the summer, and soon after getting located, can start in the pursuit of predatory animals. Many wolves are shot and trapped, especially the pups, during June. The trapping all through the summer months for wolves is much more favorable than at any time during the winter. The trapper can put in all his spare time during the summer in hunting and trapping the bounty furs, and slack up on them in the winter if he can make more money catching non-predatory fur animals.

The professional trapper should endeavor to get in a locality where there are some predatory animals which can be hunted for the bounty during the summer months. The enthusiastic trapper seldom likes to do other work, such as farming, or if he attempts it, usually gives it up as a failure, calling the work drudgery, whereas he will go out on a trap line and put in a harder day's work than any farmer would do.

Much of this country is a semi-wilderness with settlements far apart and trails few and dim. The winter trapping is hard work and the weather gets considerably colder than does any of the mountainous sections of the East. Not infrequently, the local newspapers report the death of some trapper who succumbed to the cold. There are some broad areas of plains and burnt over lands, which affords good trapping grounds for wolves and coyotes, but to follow a line over one of these sections in 30 or 40 below zero weather is almost to take your

life in hand. If the wind is getting a clear sweep for ten miles, and you are facing it, the atmosphere in the deep valleys of the Adirondacks at forty below seems in comparison like a Southern climate. Of course, the farther inland you go, the colder it is in the same longitude. Generally, the colder the country, the better quality furs it produces.

The North Woods trapper will need plenty of woolen and mackinaw clothing, traps of assorted sizes, a large proportion of which should be Nos. 3 and 4, besides several dozen small traps for marten, weasels and mink, and about six bear traps, and a gun of low trajectory. The .22 hi-power is a very good coyote gun for the Plains, and the .25-35 is also a very popular gun in the West. However, the best all-around gun for the Western trapper, in the writer's opinion, is the .250-3000 Savage. This gun will kill a wolf without adjusting the sights as far away as the average trapper can hit one; besides, it is a good big game gun and can also be used for small game. He will find a use for a pair of binoculars and for a hunting knife in his belt. Skiis are used by some trappers; others depend on snowshoes only. A toboggan comes in handy in any snow country. The writer has seen a box attached to two skiis, high up, serve the purpose of a toboggan, and the trapper said it was much easier to draw; however, it had the appearance of being easier to turn over when not on a beaten trail.

A log cabin or a well-built shack is the best form of shelter for the permanent trapper, in this country. A little farther west in the treeless sections, tepees or wickiups are used successfully by native trappers, but a greenhorn would freeze to death in the attempt to winter in one of them. It is usually necessary to stock up the cabin with provisions and with wood for the stove to last the entire winter; otherwise, arrangements will have to be made to get supplies brought in. If using a toboggan, the trapper can perhaps keep himself supplied by making bi-monthly trips out, but if located several miles back, he will have a hard time of it. Invariably it is more satisfactory and cheaper in the long run to have a team and wagon transport the camp supplies as near to the camp

as possible, in the early fall, then manage to get the outfit to the camp before winter.

When far back in the wilderness, the wise trapper does not take any chances of freezing or starving to death by having all his possessions in one camp. A fire might clean him out entirely; or there is a possibility that some wild animal will get into the camp and destroy most of the food. There are very few thieves who will take the chance of robbing a trapper's camp, but such things have happened, usually between enemies. The careful trapper usually has about three camps stocked with bedding, some clothing, provisions and cooking utensils; then his chances of getting stranded in the big woods, while alone and far from a settlement, with the chance of having to undergo great hardships to get out, are greatly minimized.

For the same farsighted reason, the trapper who goes so far back that he must stay for several months at a time, should take two rifles and two axes—articles very necessary to his comfort, if not to his life. An accident may easily happen that will put either entirely out of commission, and it is much easier to take in a pair of each than to have to stop during the most profitable period of the season, perhaps, and make a special trip out to the nearest town after a new one to replace a broken one.

Many amateur trappers do not seem to know just how to go about getting located in new territory. The best way, of course, is to go to the grounds and take a prospecting trip over them. As this may be a very expensive procedure, and not worth while all the time, the interested party can first make inquiries of "questions-and-answers" editors, or service departments, in trapping magazines. These editors usually have a vast fund of compiled and collected information at hand, and can advise the amateur intelligently on nearly any locality, whether they have actually visited the grounds themselves, or not.

The trapper should be particularly interested in certain kinds of trapping and in a particular locality. That is, the Adirondack trapper going west, should first try mountain trapping rather than plains trapping. If he is an expert fox

trapper, the chances are he can soon adapt himself to catching coyotes and wolves, animals of similar habits; though most trappers say the latter animals are considerably more difficult to catch. The trapper whose experience has been limited to trapping skunks and muskrats would stand a small chance of making a living trapping for wilderness animals. The thing for him to do is to make arrangements to assist an expert trapper until he has acquired the art.

Having decided on a particular locality and secured whatever information is readily available upon conditions in that place, the trapper should next procure topographic maps from the Geological Survey at Washingtin, D. C., or elsewhere, and also endeavor to correspond with some local inhabitants. It is usually best to write to local fur buyers, or merchants. These people may have an interest in getting you established in the country; native trappers are not keen on inviting competition. Therefore, you can seldom get any satisfaction or even reliable information from trappers. It is only natural that the trapper protects his interests as much as is legitimately possible. Usually a trapper can get an accurate line on a place entirely by correspondence, and perhaps save him a costly experimental trip.

If going into a semi- or full-fledged wilderness, it is hardly necessary to bother about making inquiries, unless you know of a trapper who has lately been in the country, and will give you reliable information. Trapping conditions, especially the abundance of fur bearing animals, are changing constantly, and no one can accurately tell what the trapping prospects are a season after he has been on the grounds. The best way, if you know trapping life, is to pack up and move into the country a month or two ahead of the trapping season, and by a little prospecting around, you will get comfortably established and do well, perhaps. Many of the most successful professional trappers are habitually nomadic, moving about the country year after year, wasting a minimum of time in looking around for trapping grounds. About all that is necessary in their case is to steer clear of another man's grounds, and this isn't a hard matter to do in a wilderness, where even to-day trappers are few and far apart. Often they are glad

to have a neighbor located within a day's travel, to whom they can come for help should misfortune happen to them.

Trapping conditions in the North Woods are very similar to those described in the Adirondack article. The winters are long, insuring good furs and plenty of time to trap them, and as mentioned heretofore, the trapper can find profitable employment for the summer, if he wants to stay in the same locality for another season.

Cubby pens are the universal set because they protect the trap and bait from being entirely snowed under. Of course, the cubby pen is generally used for land animals, such as the fisher, marten, raccoon, lynx, and sometimes the fox. A pen is apt to look suspicious to the wolf and coyote; however, it is the standard set for bears. Bear traps should always be enclosed, anyway, so there will be no possible chance that a man or domesticated animal will get caught. An old cubby pen does not bother the black bear a bit, especially if hungry and there is a prospect of a putrid fish dinner, with honey for dessert.

The bob cat and lynx are quite common in some sections of these states, and may be taken in the following manner:

Trim off the lower branches on a small evergreen and hang a rabbit or bird carcass in a conspicuous place; that is, swing it from one of the lower limbs on the side near a trail or open place where the cats travel. A bait must be in plain sight of a cat, or it will pass it by within a few feet; the cat depends almost entirely on sight to locate its dinner, evidently. Set a good No. 3 trap under the bait, in a leaf-lined bed. Cover the trap lightly and clog the chain.

Owing to this country being well watered, mink are very numerous in many localities and provide a profitable revenue to the trapper. Twenty to thirty mink are quite common catches for a season in this country. This animal is not hard to catch, especially in water sets, in which manner the most of them are taken. The northern mink takes bait fairly well during the winter months, which facilitates the ease of capturing them. In some of the middle and southern states where there are all manner of birds, crawfish, rabbits and

squirrels readily accessible, the mink will not notice the most tempting trapper's bait.

One of the most common sets for mink in use by Northern professional trappers is the familiar cubby pen. They should be built in the early fall along the banks of streams and on lake shores which are frequented by this animal. Small dead sticks should be used and they must be placed close together, or the mink will get in at the back, instead of walking over the trap. When the trapping season opens, the trapper makes the round of his cubby pen line, baiting them up with freshly caught fish, and setting his No. 1 traps in the entrance of the horseshoe-shaped den. If the pen is located in the edge of the water, so the trap will be under an inch or two of water, the set will prove most effective. The mink generally follows the edge of the water. Of course, on a stream that rises and falls very much, it is often not advisable to have a set on the edge of the water, as it would be out of commission most of the time.

As soon as it begins to snow, the trapper usually finds it necessary to move his cubby pens, and build new ones or protect them properly from being snowed under. After the streams freeze over, the mink does not travel much on land, but stays under the ice, where it finds an abundance of food and shelter. Then cubby pens are not very effectual. However, the trapper who is thoroughly familiar with his grounds and the runways of fur bearers over them, may know of several places where the mink travels over land, at least during the early winter and again in the early spring. Cubby pens built under evergreens and roofed over with evergreen boughs to keep out the snow, will remain in operation until two or three feet of snow have accumulated. Such sets are usually built by the side of a known mink trail or runway, such as a crossing place between two streams, or across the neck of a bend in a stream, near the mouth of a stream, a fork in a stream, and similar places. These mid-winter sets must be baited with something that will give off some odor even when frozen solid, otherwise there will be nothing to attract the animal. For instance, there would be scarcely odor enough to a frozen fresh fish to be detected even by the keen-nosed

mink. Fresh blood or bloody meat will attract most carnivorous animals in zero weather when their natural prey is hard for them to get.

The next most useful set for the mink is the blind set made in runways and holes in banks. These sets are productive before the water freezes, and after, too, if there is an air space under the ice. The trapper should become familiar with the runs of the animal before the ice freezes, then he may reason with fair accuracy that the mink will use the same runways and burrows under the ice. After the ice freezes, the water lowers, leaving plenty of room for trails along the banks.

The trapper locates the runways by chopping holes through the ice over likely spots. Air holes over ripples are often good places to make sets. Sometimes they will show use by having mud smeared around the edges.

Trapping wolves and coyotes is a specialty and the trapper who is an expert on these animals in other localities could expect equally good success in the Michigan country. Trapping these animals on the snow is a job for the expert and not every trapper makes a success of it. The blind trails get more wolves than bait sets, but if the trapper finds these animals working on a carcass they have killed, it is possible to trap them in trails or on knolls fifty or a hundred yards away. In no case should the trapper attempt to set traps around a carcass unless it is snowing and he exercises extreme care not to disturb things or leave human odor around the sets. An inch or two of snow can cover a set beautifully, but of course, the trapper must take chances on it snowing to the proper depth. There is seldom any way of protecting the traps from the entire snowfall, should it snow a foot deep.

The marten and fisher are found only in a few of the wilder sections, and where found can be trapped throughout the winter. They do not stay holed up long and travel enough to leave sufficient signs to guide the trapper in making his sets. The methods of trapping these animals are practically similar in all the snow countries, and they are not found elsewhere.

PROFITS OF TRAPPING IN THE CANADIAN NORTHWEST

By Raymond Thompson

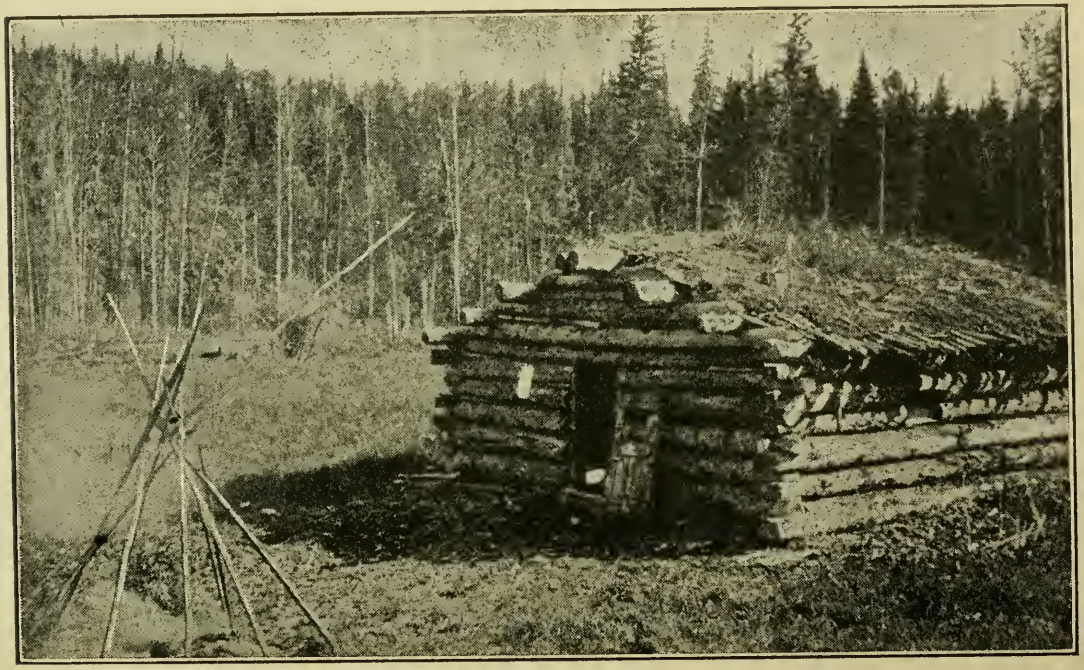
ONE of the most surprising things, when one stops to consider, is the amount of steel traps sold annually, in both the United States and Canada. In every city, town and hamlet, on every ranch and farm (grain, fruit or stock) one will find the steel trap—to say nothing of those in the professional trappers' cabins. Sometimes they lie scattered about—evidence of a careless tyro in the trapping game; others, when not in use, may be seen hanging neatly on pegs in cabin, woodshed, barn or basement.

Perhaps the schoolboy knows of a small stream on the outskirts of his city. When fall comes 'round he may be seen in the early morning with a packsack on his back and a .22 rifle across one shoulder, wending his way toward that stream. Here, on the soft oozy banks of that creek and on the slippery logs that cross it his watchful eye detects a likely set for a muskrat with just a possible chance of getting that rara avis, the mink. Now this boy is impelled by exactly the same forces as the professional trapper who runs a hundred-mile trap line through a trackless wilderness and numbers his traps in hundreds. I know—because I have been there—I have trapped during my spare time as a schoolboy in the State of Washington and for six years have held no less than fifty and sometimes over a hundred miles of trap lines in the Canadian wilderness.

The point I wish to emphasize in this article is: There are just two factors that go into the making of any trapper—pastime or professional. These are the two P's in t-r-a-p-p-i-n-g—Pleasure and Profit.

Very rarely is the one considered without the other, but in my own way of looking at things, I believe that pleasure has more influence over the prospective trapper than profit.

Well, then, what pleasure is there in trapping? "Oh," you say, "all kinds!" You're right, there are all kinds, yet these



A Professional Trapper's Camp at Crooked Lake, Alberta

same pleasures are hard to define. There is that eon-old harkening back to nature—that inherited call of the wild, if you please. On some of us it works in light perennial attacks and we throw it off with a two weeks' dose of hunting or fishing, which holds us down for another twelve-month. But others of us are so afflicted with this deadly disease it requires from six to eight months of treatment annually to get it out of the system. There is an old saying, "Once a trapper, always a trapper," and I believe it is true in the majority of cases. I know the time will come when I will find it impossible to trap, yet I will always have a warm spot in my heart for the trapper. I can never forget the call of the wide open spaces, the lure of the dark frost-bound forests in the Big Woods Country. Who has listened to the "loon that laughs and cries, down to those reflected skies" and has not been moved to the innermost depths of the soul? Who has not been thrilled by the "ha-ha-ha-wee" of the Old Squaw or Cockawee—the harsh rasping call of the raven—the bark of the fox in mating time and the howl of the wolf-pack? Truly, when once tasted, this wilderness life leaves an indelible mark on a man's soul.

Some men who take to professional trapping are, like myself, of a sober-minded disposition that calls for solitude rather than the busy marts of city life. I am ill at ease amongst a bunch of "cultured" men and like the Ugly Duckling, must seek safety in silence. I have been alone in the wilderness for several weeks at a stretch and cannot consider it such a harrowing experience as some good people imagine. I have been lonesome at times, I'll admit, but if one has plenty to occupy one's time (what trapper has not?), the days pass swiftly. One hears a lot of bunk about trappers going mad through solitude but I have never had the pleasure of meeting one of these interesting "locoed" gentlemen (unless I was so crazy myself I failed to recognize my own kind). Yet I do believe this—that any man who craves for companionship and the "bright lights" would do well to take some partners along on a trapping expedition.

The natural instinct of the hunter is preëminently strong in the average trapper. Whether God intended man to stalk and slaughter his wild folk no man can say—all we are sure

of is that some of us have all the craving of a modern Nimrod and it must have an outlet somewhere. Men hunt with the gun, the steel trap, the fishing tackle, the notebook and the camera and each in his (or her) particular line is an enthusiast to the core.

But let me say that one feature dominates in every phase of trapping, as far as pleasure is concerned. This is Anticipation. It is the shy Goddess of Chance that waits 'round each bend of the trail—to be wooed and won by the daring woodsman. And once won she scatters her favors with a lavish hand—now in the shape of a beautifully-furred fisher pelt, now in a long-hoped-for marten run and once, Oh never-to-be-forgotten day, she has left a full-furred silver fox. It is Anticipation that spurs the trapper on, hour after hour. What though he may be tired and hungry—surely there will be a reward for his perseverance in the next trap. It is always the NEXT trap—for thus Hope keeps her shining face ever before us by instantaneously transferring our thoughts from one object to another. Naturally the trapper has some favorite sets; perhaps where he has noticed the continued crossing of a fisher or other valuable furbearer. So, it is often the case that a heavier percentage of Anticipation (or expectation) is placed on these particular sets—hence Realization is felt all the keener—be it joy or the reverse. Sometimes the trapper is pleasantly surprised by catching an animal in a set that has been considered no good.

I remember once catching a cross fox in a set of which I had practically forgone all hope. In this instance Anticipation had been working at low ebb and the full on-rushing tide of Realization left me dumb with joy. At another time I had my dreams of Anticipation rudely shattered by grim Reality in the remains of a silver fox—literally torn to pieces by a golden eagle.

Who can weigh the relative importance of Anticipation and Realization—to which may we ascribe the greater pleasure? Surely—there can be no pain, no sorrow in Anticipation, for "Hope springs eternal from the human breast," but sometimes Realization strikes us dumb with disappointment. Yet, when one considers, Anticipation has a direct bearing on Realization

and the greater the former the more forceful the effects of the latter.

For instance: Supposing I have seen a silver fox cross my trail at a certain point. Naturally I set a trap for sly Reynard. A few days later, just after a heavy snowfall, I visit the trap knowing full well there can be nothing in it on account of the snow covering the trap. Well, Mr. Fox has been there all right and tramped all over the set. I "raise" the trap as skillfully as I know how, thinking, "I'll get you next time, Old Boy!"

The following week is splendid for trapping—no snow—no thawing weather. Anticipation, as I near this particular set, is working a double shift. Consequently Realization "strikes me pink" as the Cockney says, when I find the remains of a snowshoe rabbit in my trap and fresh fox tracks all about. But it is one of the pleasures of trapping to "try again."

So now, in summing up the pleasures of the trapper we have the lure of the woods, lakes and streams, the natural craving of a few men for solitude, the instinct of the hunter and the all-embracing pleasure in Anticipation.

There yet remains the other P in t-r-a-p-p-i-n-g, which spells Profit. Right on the word "Go" let me say that there is a vast amount of ignorance connected with the amount of money that professional trappers make. I have received a good many letters of inquiry pertaining to this subject and the one which I herein quote is typical of the lot:

Chicago, U. S. A., Nov. 19, 1919.

Mr. Raymond Thompson,
Edson, Alberta.

Dear Sir:

Having read your article, "The Arctic Trading Post," in the November number of ———, and it sure was a cracker-jack! Now I am coming to you for a little information and I know you are just the man who can settle a little argument I had with a friend of mine.

I state that in certain parts of Canada and Alaska are trappers, who at the present writing make from $5,000.00 to $8,000.00 a season in trapping. This friend of mine says there

is not a trapper in North America who makes even $3,000.00 clear money in a season. Perhaps you can mention names of some trappers you come in contact with whom make these amounts, and if you can, please mention the locality.

Trusting that you will be kind enough to settle this argument and answer this letter at your earliest convenience, I beg to remain, Yours truly,

S. J. Pollack.

This letter is self-explanatory. To think of the average trapper making $5,000.00 in a single season! Why the woods would be so full of men in a short time there wouldn't be any room for the fur-bearers! Yet, do not consider for a moment that I am casting any slurs on Mr. Pollack's judgment—the same idea is prevalent in many circles. And even up here, where trappers come and go in hundreds, one hears of marvelous stakes being made in the trapping game. But these are one and all fabrications. What finally "wised me up" on this big stake business was the fact that I never saw any of these big catches and I flatter myself I have seen "some" furs in this north country. When it comes right down to brass tacks the trapper who makes anything over $500.00 clear of all expenses may consider himself fortunate and far and away above the average. Now I hate to shatter anyone's golden dreams of getting rich at trapping, but the truth should hurt no one in this case.

Trapping is like any other profession; it has its varying degrees of success. Thus we find one trapper barely making his grubstake, while another, right alongside, may be making a "real" stake. In this instance the difference may be encountered, for in the individual—the man with the steel traps! I have seen a great many men go out on trapping expeditions and not make even enough to pay for their grub. Some men have the idea that trapping isn't work. To all such I say, "Try it." In a few months they will be ready to take up grave digging, tunnel making or some other light profession; they will be convinced that there is neither pleasure nor profit in trapping—for them.

The trapper, ere he would realize a profit from his season's labors must first serve his apprenticeship. One may be skilled

in another line and yet fail miserably at trapping. To illustrate this point I will mention a particular instance that came under my observation.

The first winter I spent in this country there were three electricians camped at what is now the headquarters of my "Hundred Mile Trap Line" (Mile 27, on the old Grande Prairie Trail). It was their first experience in trapping, and, as far as I know, their last. They had put a considerable sum of money into their cabin and it surely was a "sumptuous" abode for trappers.

Now, while these men were primarily out for pleasure, yet they expected to peel large "rolls" in profit from the fur bearers in their immediate vicinity. I say "immediate," because they never got far enough away from camp to endanger the lives of any animals worth trapping. Had they prospected a little at the beginning of the season, they might have discovered the fact that there was a good marten country within a day's "march" of their camp. I often wondered if they figured an expert trapper would be "scabbing" if he went into a city and tackled the installation of some electrical apparatus. Most likely it would be a "shock" all around. Yet they, as electricians, thought nothing of trying the trapper's job. Oh, well, we live and learn.

In every walk of life we find men in misfit occupations—square pegs in round holes. So it is in the woods. A man who has spent all the years of his life as a "pen pusher" must not hope to master all the secrets of the wilderness in a few months—for the wisest woodsman has much to learn there. And "vice versa" a man who has lived solely in the bush and along lakes and streams will find life very difficult in a big city. The fording of a swift stream, the negotiation of dangerous rapids—these alike pale in insignificance alongside the rush and rattle of a crowded street corner or the sickening drop of the iron cage down an elevator shaft.

So, my friends, as the average trapper wouldn't dream of tackling your job, why do you figure you can profit at trapping without experience?

Personally, I follow the trapping profession for the love of nature per se. I am a carpenter by trade and my job is only

good during the summer months. Yet I do not trap merely for pleasure, as I have a wife and child to support and it costs real money to live in this country, with clothing, fuel and what not. So with me, profit is also a big item when I decide in favor of the bush. Yet the most I ever made in one season was a little short of $1,500.00. And part of that time I could have been making $12.00 per day at my trade on account of a local building boom. Furs were high but so were living expenses. Then, too, I had better "luck," as everyone said, than most of the trappers. Of course, I "heard" of men making three and four times that amount, but inquiry in the right direction proved these statements were false.

To arrive at some definite average of the actual profit that trappers make, I will consider three different trappers, trapping in different localities for the same number of years and see what we get. Let us start with the season of 1915-16, when furs started to gradually pick up after a "bearish" market. These figures are all based on facts—not theories—as I personally know each trapper I mention.

First, then, were the Neilson Brothers, Hans and Neils, expert Scandinavian trappers before they ever saw the Athabasca country. Also they had trapped in the Pine Pass country, way up on the Peace, three successive years. 1915-16 was their third and best year in which their catch was 125 martens, 2 fisher, 56 lynx, 3 black wolves and 42 beavers. Their martens brought $4.00 each (some difference from $40.00 and $50.00 which they averaged in the season of 1919-1920), a total of $600.00; fishers $15.00 a piece, making another $30.00; 56 lynx at $7.00 makes $392.00; three wolves at $25.00 makes $75.00, and 42 beavers at an average of $4.50 makes $189.00—a total catch of $1,286.00, or $643.00 per man. A conservative estimate of this catch if made in season of 1919-1920 would be: 125 martens at $40.00 = $6,000.00; 2 fishers at $75.00 = $150.00; 56 lynx at $45.00 = $2,520.00; 3 wolves at $50.00 = $150.00; and 42 beavers at $30.00 = $1,260.00, a total of ten thousand and eighty dollars ($10,080.00).

Now, most likely, some of my readers will "jump on my neck" saying that I picked the worst year I could for an example—that is, when the market was on tottering legs. But

just bear with me and you will discover that the fur market is governed largely by the law of supply and demand; that is, when furs are plentiful a normal demand is easily supplied at a low figure; likewise a scarcity of furs results in a strong demand in order to satisfy the requirements of the trade and competitive buyers force a high market. To make it plainer: What is the difference, as far as money is concerned, to sell 20 lynx at $10.00 each or 10 lynx at $20.00 each, in either case the gross return is $200.00 and, after all is said, it's money that counts in the material things of this world.

But I digress. I have mentioned the two Neilson boys because they were expert trappers in an excellent territory. I have yet to consider another. During the season of 1915-16 there was but one trapper who I know for a certainty as having a greater total of value in furs than myself, that is, of course, in this particular part of the Athabasca country. That trapper was Oastein Aasen, a Norwegian, working in the vicinity of the Athabasca Crossing. Incidentally, Ole, as he was popularly known, was the best man on skiis I have ever had the pleasure to see in action. I understand that he has since won honors in the Edmonton Ski Tournament, though I would not vouch for the statement. Ole's catch that year, according to my diary (which I have faithfully kept for five years while on the trap line) was 31 lynx, 17 martens, 6 red foxes, 3 cross foxes, 1 silver fox, 5 minks, 12 wolves, 162 weasels and 3 bears, amounting to a total of $750.00. I may add that the silver fox brought him only $140.00.

Now taking the $643.00 that each of the Neilson brothers made and adding to it the $750.00, we get a total of $1,394.00, or a final average of $697.00 per man for the season of 1915-16.

The two following seasons were so extremely hard on the trapper, owing to unusual conditions brought about by the war, I will skip over them and take up the season of 1918-19. Theodore Walters, a Dominion fire ranger, had his headquarters at Tony river, some forty miles north of the Athabasca Crossing. Walters had been trapping in this country for ten years, therefore it goes without saying that he was a capable bushman. He had an outfit unexcelled by any trapper in this country and in his capacity as fire ranger was continu-

ally traversing, during the summer months, the territory which he trapped in the winter. Thus if any man had an opportunity, he had. Not only were his traps all strung out, ready to set, his trail all cut out and blazed, but he had become acquainted with the habits and whereabouts of the various animals. I know Walters personally, as I trapped one season with him, and a more energetic man would be hard to find. Besides he was certainly well versed in woods lore, having trapped among the Cree Indians and breeds for a number of years.

Furs were scarce owing to the disappearance of the snowshoe rabbit, but prices were on the upward trend and they kept soaring until in March, 1919, they reached a point where they seemed unstable indeed! It was merely the result of competitive buying after two particularly dull seasons.

Walter's catch that year was as follows: 9 foxes (6 red, 2 cross and 1 silver), 5 lynx, 11 martens, 4 minks, 2 fishers, 3 wolves, 2 otter (one on Buck Lake and one where Buck Creek joined the Little Smoky river), 97 weasels and 2 bears, a very small catch in proportion to those of other seasons. Yet this catch realized him the tidy little sum of $1,405.00. Besides his own catch he collected a handsome bunch of furs by trading with the Indians of Hasche and Crooked Lakes. Walters was a staunch believer in the Hudson's Bay Company factor at Sturgeon Lake, when it came to disposing of his furs at a profit. He believed that old Tom Kerr, the factor, would invariably give him a square deal. Incidentally the silver fox that Walters caught brought him but $325.00. It is a well-known fact in this country that, while every other fur went higher in value than it had ever gone, the pelt of the silver fox sold in a very indifferent manner. My personal opinion of the matter is that the raising of the silver fox in the eastern States and Canada has effected the value of the pelt for good.

We will now drop back a notch south, into the Baptiste and Hay river countries, to the trap lines of Ole Hendrickson, Charles Lingrell and Harold Parnall. These three men were partners in trapping and in addition Lingrell and Parnall had been infused with the pioneer spirit sufficiently to cause them to "squat" on some splendid flats on the Baptiste and start a

stock ranch. Hendrickson worked for them outside of the trapping season.

These three lads had a very good way of running their trap lines. Hendrickson ran a marten line south into the Moose mountains, Lingrell a fox and lynx line north of Kimberly Lake, and Parnall, a fox, mink and lynx line west into the Hay river country.

I had trapped the Kimberly lake and Hay river lines previously; in fact, I had built two of the cabins on the former line, one at Kimberly lake and the other at Moose lake, just half way between Kimberly lake and the Baptiste river. Therefore I know that their trapping territories were the best in that part of the north. Besides, I was trapping just west of Hendrickson in the Moose mountains and saw him quite frequently. Their catch for the season, counting the spring hunt, was a little better than $1,000.00 per man. This, with the $1,400.00 that Walters made, leaves an average of $1,200.00 per man, as the season's average.

And now we will determine the average for the third and last season, that of 1919-20, when furs were out of sight in the market and conspicuous by their absence in the bush.

George Hackett, "Little George," he was called, as distinguishing him from "Weasel George" Hodges at the Athabasca (so named on account of his sole ability as a trapper, being the downfall of 20 weasels during the season), trapped up toward Old Man river on the Athabasca. Hackett was an ex-cowboy and trapper from the States. He had followed the ever-shifting frontier of this "Last Great West" all his life. He and a partner, Ole Eckholm, for three consecutive seasons outfitted in Edmonton and took the Canadian National west to Dalehurst, about two hundred miles distant. Here they built either a boat, securing the lumber from a sawmill there, or constructed a raft and launched forth into the wilderness via the Athabasca river which flows northeast by Dalehurst.

Their destination was about sixty miles downstream. Here they trapped toward Hay river in a westerly direction. One of my cabins was just a mile below and across the Athabasca from them. I had a dog team and made trips into Edson regularly. I used to bring out their mail, whenever there was

any and "flag" them by hanging an old red mackinaw shirt out on a projecting ridge pole of my cabin. This was plainly visible from the opposite side where they ran a trapline past and the river was frozen over at that point so they could cross.

Hackett's and Eckholm's catch, including the spring hunt amounted to 32 marten, 2 wolves, 3 lynx, 6 minks, 2 bears and 41 muskrats, from the sale of which they realized $2,244.00, or $1,122.00 per man. They were late in getting out with their bears and muskrats. The bottom of the market collapsed and they lost a good $100.00 on their spring catch. Incidentally, I may say that one of the best trappers I have ever met, Bert Severson, came out with close on to a $2,000.00 catch and the best offer he got was $300.00. This happened in June, 1920, after the "splash."

As I mentioned, I was trapping on the opposite side of the Athabasca, on a "Hundred Mile Trap Line." That never-to-be-forgotten season of 1919-20 was surely a peculiar one. The inevitable law of supply and demand was working a double shift. There was a great demand but no supply—that is, there were no furs in most localities. Marten were practically all the furs I could catch. There seemed to be quite a few lynx rambling about, but they were indifferent to scent and bait alike, and when I set a trap in a certain place I couldn't be even reasonably assured that the big cat would ever return that way. A fox or wolf track was a rare thing. Weasels were plentiful and brought $1.50 as an average price, so were not to be despised. The snow was unusually heavy and continually filled my heavy snowshoe and toboggan trails. Anyone who knows aught about snowshoeing may readily guess what we trappers were up against that winter. I was everlastingly breaking fresh trails and as a result only made an average of two trips a month.

The bulk of my trapping was done on Moose Mountain, a heavily-wooded range following the general course of the Athabasca river. As I previously stated, marten were my chief object and in pursuing this elusive little fur bearer I wore out two pair of snowshoes. There seemed to be quite a few around but their habits, for some unknown reason, were very erratic.

I recall distinctly setting traps where a "run" had occurred only to be disappointed; they didn't return that way. Generally there would be a "run" over some portion of my line where traps were scarce or snowed in. At that I made one good haul, taking five dark marten and a fair fisher from my traps in one day; a total value of $360.00. However, don't be misled by that statement; there were some trips that I didn't get a single marten, and its the average that counts.

The marten is easy to catch providing he comes anywhere near the trapper's set and the trap is in good order. He is such an inquisitive little creature; he must needs investigate every nook and cranny and will step into a naked trap without hesitation. The main thing, as I hinted above, is to keep the trap in good order. It takes very little obstruction in the shape of twigs or snow to prevent a marten trap from springing. Time and again I have my sets all snowed in when Mr. Marten paid his visit. I have tried all kinds of "tree sets," and wouldn't trade an ordinary "cubby-house set" on the snow for a dozen of them. I have trapped for marten in various localities, when the snow was deep and when there was none to speak of, and the common little "cubby-house" roofed with balsam or spruce boughs is good enough for yours truly. I'll admit that a cozy little pen is a great attraction for squirrels, rabbits, and whisky-jacks (Canadian jays), but at the same time a marten will rarely pass one by. Whether the set is baited or not—his bump of curiosity is aroused. The saying, "Curiosity killed a cat," is also true of many a poor marten. Then, too, it is a great set for weasels and I caught a little better than $200.00 worth of these little white animals that winter. On the other hand I have had temptingly-baited tree sets, that is, sets off the ground, totally ignored by the wandering marten time after time.

Well, I didn't intend this to be a "treatise" on marten, or any other kind of trapping. I got 21 marten that season, which together with the $200.00 worth of weasels, a fisher, lynx, red fox and a few muskrats caught in the spring brought my catch up to a figure of $1,460.00. This sum with that of $1,122.00 (Hackett's and Eckholm's catch) makes $2,582.00, or an aver-

age of $1,291.00 per man for the season. In summing up we find averages as in the following table:

Trappers	*Location*	*Season*	*Average*
Neilson Bros.,	Pouce Coupe and Pine Pass..	1915-16	$643.00
O. Aasen,	Athabasca Crossing.....	1915-16	751.00
T. Walters,	Tony River.....	1918-19	1405.00
Hendrickson, Lingrell and Parnall,	Athabasca	1918-19	1000.00
Hackett and Eckholm,	Old Main River.....	1919-20	1122.00
R. Thompson,	Moose Mountains.....	1919-20	1460.00
Total (six averages).....			$6381.00
Final average, per man per season.....			$1063.50

Thus we can readily see that none of these trappers became rich, and I believe anyone who knows the trapping game in this north country will bear me out in these figures. I could relate dozens of instances where "trappers" haven't commenced to pay for their grubstake, not to speak of their outfit. Generally speaking, the same idea is prevalent among outers of this "class"; they expect something for nothing. One's success in trapping (barring some extraordinary cases of "bull-headed" luck), is absolutely controlled by what one puts into the game. The more intently the trapper studies his environment and its relation to the animals he intends trapping, the harder he works in blazing trails and building cabins, the greater will be his reward. Of course, I don't mean to say that an expert trapper can catch furs "where they ain't"—he must exercise discretion in choosing a location.

From the foregoing data it will be seen that the amount trappers make fluctuates from year to year according to market values. Thus we find the catch of the Neilson Bros. in 1915-1916 to be the largest in numbers of furs taken, yet lowest in money value. And, vice versa, my own catch of 1919-20 represents the least amount of furs I ever caught in one season, yet the value was the highest (barring the previous season when through "luck" I got three silver foxes from one set).

In 1915-16 it took an average of 200 marten to make $1,000.00; in 1917, 150; in 1918, 100; in 1919, 40; and in 1920,

20 marten at $50.00 each, made the $1,000.00. Likewise, in 1915, I sold lynx for $3.40 and $4.00, and got $45.00 for one in 1920. However, the 1920 market was undoubtedly forced too high, and the resulting slump caught thousands unawares —trappers, buyers and manufacturers alike. The trapper who disposed of his catch before this slump had cause to count himself lucky indeed; in fact, I was one of the lucky ones myself.

An interesting point we derive from the above figures is this: The trapper makes more money when the fur bearers are scarce and the market high than when the animals are plentiful and there is no demand for them. But whether there is more pleasure in collecting 200 marten at $5.00 each or 20 marten at $50.00 each, is a matter open for discussion. Certainly the smaller, yet equally valuable catch, entails less work in the handling, skinning, drying and shipping.

Another thing that enters into the amount of profit one gets out of the trapping expedition is the care in the handling of furs. A little extra time spent in skinning and stretching undoubtedly pays well in the long run. We may say that this effects the pleasure of trapping also, for it certainly "tickles" the woodsman to receive reasonably fair returns for his catch.

This article has dealt throughout with the professional side of the game for which I hope the spare-time trapper will forgive me. But the same laws apply in the latter case. First, one must love trapping enough to devote his precious spare hours to it. Thus we account for the pleasure in it, and the extra dollars are certainly profit.

When I was a boy in my 'teens (I am not very old now, for that matter), I used to walk two miles every evening to reach a small lake where I had some 'rat traps. And then one whole fortnight, Christmas vacation, I was a real trapper. One of the neighbors took me and my outfit the "terrible" distance of seven miles out to a forsaken ranch house in a coulee.

There was an old cook stove already there and I had a small air-tight in my paraphernalia. Indeed I had grub to have lasted two months instead of two weeks, and my layout in its entirety was "a grand and glorious affair." I was lonesome, I'll admit, but that two weeks must have influenced

my later life. Thus is proven the saying, "The child is father of the man." If I considered giving any advice to a father regarding his son, I would say, "Watch closely the good he does of his own free will during his spare hours and encourage him in that particular line."

I do not care to enter into a discussion, either for or against the worthiness of trapping as a profession, but I would advise anyone who considers it an unworthy manner in which to devote one's time to "count well the merits of their own calling." Those who complain most have the least cause—sometimes.

HUNTING PREDATORY ANIMALS FOR BOUNTY

By Bud Dalrymple, *United States Hunter*

Photographs by the Author

AUTHOR'S NOTE—*The Grey Wolf is a very destructive animal, not only killing colts and calves, but horses and cattle as well.*

The coyote preys on young calves, sheep and poultry, and is very destructive to young birds, especially while still in the nest.

AS A GOVERNMENT hunter of predatory animals, I was being transferred for a short time from South Dakota to Wyoming, and as the distance was about 200 miles, we (Mrs. Dalrymple and myself) took our bed, saddle, kodak, and rifle, and made the trip in our auto. We made one hundred and eleven miles the first day over some good and bad roads, and arrived at Edgemont, South Dakota, at 6 p. m. While in the hotel after supper, we received the information by a rancher that a wolf was doing damage and bothering a rancher on Lance Creek, some thirty miles farther west, and on the route to Cow Creek Buttes, which place we were headed for.

I called up the ranch by phone, and Mr. Ed. Rumney said there was a wolf in his locality, and it had lately killed three head of his cattle and that he would be very glad if we could stop at his ranch the next day and try our luck on the old wolf. I told Mr. Rumney that if he would have some saddle horses ready the next morning, we would stop there and see if we could locate and get the wolf, which I judged had a den somewhere near his ranch.

He phoned me that he certainly would be glad to do that; so I said, "Alright, we will be there to-morrow morning." I stepped outside of the hotel; the wind was blowing a gale and some snow was falling; as I went back into the hotel, I said to Mrs. Dalrymple, "Guess we are going to get snowed

A Wolfer's Camp on the Plains. Coyote Pups in the Foreground and Coyote Scalps on the Board

in here." However, the next morning the ground was still bare, but the wind was blowing a gale, and then some. We had never been over the auto road on west, and as there was a rancher in town from near Mr. Rumney's ranch, and as he was going out soon, I told him we would follow him out. Well, we finally got started, and as his Henry Ford was only hitting on two and sometimes no cylinders, and as the wind was right in our faces, we made poor time getting to Rumney's ranch. We arrived there about noon, and Mr. Rumney had saddle horses in the corral all ready for us. After dinner we saddled up and struck out to see what wolf signs we could find. When we were about three miles from the ranch, we found old and fresh wolf tracks.

We tracked them around over the Buttes, down the deep coolies and back over a large sand hill, and put in the afternoon trailing them around. Although we did not see any den, I was satisfied there was one and that we were just about to it, and told Mr. Rumney it would not take long the next morning to find out whether there was a den or not. The next morning, bright and early, we were ready to hit for the wolf tracks, and as we started off, Mrs. Rumney called to Ed and asked him if he would get back in time for dinner; he replied, "No, guess not." I laughed at him and told him that we would be back before noon, as there was only a small strip of country that there was a chance for the den to be in. We started for that part of the country and by 9 a. m. were looking in the wolf den.

As it was the last day of March, and few pups are born before the first of April, there were not many signs around the den, and I told Mr. Rumney that we might possibly be a few days early, but we got close to the den before we could tell just where and how it was. We put a saddle blanket in one end of the den, and I left my cartridge vest in the other end, so in case Mrs. Wolf was at home she would not come out while we went back to the ranch to get my search light and Luger automatic pistol, so that I could crawl into the den and get the pups and the old wolf, if they were in there. We hit straight for the ranch; then we took my car and made a circle around to several ranches to see how many wolf traps

we could find, and while we found plenty of traps, very few of them were strong enough to hold a wolf, as they had been used by the ranchers to trap coyotes and skunks.

We finally gathered up some twenty odd traps and got back to the Rumney ranch by noon, and after dinner as Mrs. Rumney was very anxious to see a wolf den, and as there was an old road that would take us near the den, I took my car and we all went over to it. I told Ed it would be a joke if the old wolf would be wearing my shell vest and his saddle blanket when we got to the den.

Everything was just as we had left it, so I took my hat off, but on a cap, tied my trouser legs about my boot heels; then with the trusty .30 Luger and a searchlight, I crawled in the den. Unluckily for the wolves I am small and can crawl in most any wolf den, if it does not make too short a turn. After working my way back some 15 feet, I saw a bunch of little wolf pups, and also, just back of the pups, the front foot of the old wolf. The den made a sharp bend right where she was, and all I could see was just her front foot; now and then she would poke her nose out, but would not give me a chance to shoot her in the head. While I am not afraid of an old wolf in the den, I did not like the idea of having to crawl right up to her nose in order to shoot her in the head; but after lying there on my stomach for some time and the old wolf not showing any desire to come out, I decided that I would have to get up close enough to poke my head around that bed in the den if I was going to get that old wolf, and that was what I was after, so I crawled up to where the den made a sharp turn and poked my head and the Luger pistol around at the same time, and with a quick aim I fired three bullets at her head, two of which took effect. I then backed out of the den and got a sack and went back in and sacked up the eight little wolves; then I got a throw rope and went in and tied the rope around the old wolf's neck and told Mr. Rumney that when I called pull, to pull on the rope and help me drag the old wolf out. We soon had her out, and then I took some pictures of the old wolf and pups, and say, you never saw a fellow more tickled over anything than Mr. Rumney was when he saw the old wolf dead.

Mrs. Rumney said she could tell by his looks when we returned that morning that we had found the den. We set out a few more traps around the den, as there seemed to be another wolf around there, and judging by the tracks it appeared to be a small yearling; and the next day or two we put out a few more traps, and looked the country over to see if there were any signs of more wolves around, but could find no more wolf signs.

We caught one woolly coyote and a lot of rabbits in the traps set for the other wolf and as we were supposed to be out in Cow Creek Buttes, I cranked the car and we pulled out, getting through to the Cow Creek Buttes country without any trouble, only some of the Creek crossings were so narrow and deep that our car almost stood on end several times, and it required all the horsepower she had to pull her out, and sure made her grunt and groan.

Well, we rode through the Cow Creek Buttes country, Lightning Creek, Box Creek, Walker Creek, Bobcat Creek, and a lot more creeks, and could find very few wolf signs, although we were supposed to be in a wolf country. Then one morning I rode in a piece of country not far from a ranch and the last place a wolfer would look for a wolf den, and there right in a pasture were wolf tracks, both old and fresh. Well, I got busy, and in less than two hours I had found the wolf den, and got eight little wolf pups which were about a week old. The old wolf was not in the den, and we set out a bunch of traps for her, but there were so many range horses and cattle running there that we could not keep the traps set where we first set them; then after we found several good places to set them, the cook at the ranch where we were stopping got so cranky we could not put up with her—as we did not have our own camp outfit, we had to stop at ranches. We pulled up the traps and pulled over to the C ranch some twelve miles northwest; here we were treated fine, and I also wish to say that Mr. and Mrs. Ed. Rumney certainly treated us fine.

We set out some wolf traps in the Cow Creek Buttes country southwest of the C ranch and caught a wolf, but the trap was not as strong as it should have been and the wolf pulled

out. We caught a large bobcat about the same time which got in both traps solid.

We then headed back for South Dakota May 1st, and after getting our saddle horses and camp outfit together, we pulled over here on the Pine Ridge Reservation to hunt coyotes, and in the last six weeks we scalped over sixty of the woolly ones. We shot one old female some time ago which was the lightest in color of any coyote I have ever seen. She looked like a white wolf, but, of course, was not nearly so large. We had quite a time getting this old white coyote. I took a shot at her at something over six hundred yards, and the bullet struck her in the hip low down and knocked her over, but she soon was up again and going, and at that distance I knew it was almost useless to try to hit her on the run. We had about a quarter of a mile of Badlands to ride through in getting over to where she ran over the hill, so when we got over there she was not in sight, but we tracked her across some bare Badland soil for over a mile and could see the blood drops on the white soil; then she struck a grassy table and the tracking was all off. We were very much disgusted with our luck, as we thought the white coyote would surely crawl in some washout or sink hole, and we would not get to see just what kind of a freak she was. The next morning, however, when we made a ride over the country near where we last saw her trail, we were surprised to see her lying on a side hill some five hundred yards away. She saw us about the same time and got up and ran over a hill. We could tell she was quite lame, so we took up a deep ravine thinking we might beat her to some very rough Badland; but just as we galloped out to the edge of a table, she went over the wall and down into the very roughest part of the Badlands. There was no chance to get down anywhere with our horses, so I jumped off and ran out on a point so I could see across the Basin, and could see the white coyote going through at about three hundred yards. So I turned loose on her with my .25 caliber high power rifle, and with the third shot I got her in a front leg. She rolled over, but got up again and went wobbling along; sometimes she would fall over, then she would get up and go at it again. I emptied the magazine of

my rifle, then sent four more after her, and at last I landed her for good. We left our horses and found a place where we could get down and went over and took some pictures of the white coyote, and then scalped her for Uncle Sam. She looked like she was a cross between some white dog and a coyote. We get one quite often that is a cross between a dog and a coyote. Now this is not guessing at it, for I have seen common dogs following a coyote on the range in mating season.

We had some fun getting some big coyote pups out of a den a few days later. They ran in a place where we could not dig them out, so we got a long willow stick, and Mrs. Dalrymple poked them out and as they ran out I used the Winchester 12-gauge riot gun on them. Four of the pups came out at once, and I had to work that old pump gun pretty fast, but I scooped them all.

Another day we saw an old coyote and two pups out on a flat and managed to run the pups down and shoot them, but did not get the old coyote. We found where the coyote had killed and eaten a nice young calf near where we got the two pups the day before. Many a calf goes down into the coyote's stomach, especially during May and June when the coyotes are feeding their pups.

It is much harder to find a coyote den than a wolf den, as the coyote is much lighter and does not travel one trail from the den like a wolf does. Until you get within approximately 200 yards of a coyote den, you will not usually see enough tracks to warrant there being a den; but many times when you are half a mile or possibly a mile from a wolf den, you will see a trail leading straight to it and can locate the den without much hunting.

Here on the Reservations, I have in the latter part of April seen wolf trails through the heavy grass that could be seen at a distance of a quarter of a mile. When hunting either wolf or coyote dens and you see where the old wolf or coyote has been lying down for some time, usually out on a high point, you will know that you are near a den, not over two hundred yards and likely not more than fifty yards. These places are what we wolfers call the guard nests. The old

wolf or coyote will sometimes have four or five of these nests around her den, and nine times out of ten she can see the den from any of these nests. When the pups are large enough to leave the den and keep bothering her, she will go back likely three or four hundred yards and fix a guard nest, but it will always be where she can see the den and pups from the nest, or possibly by taking just a few steps. After the pups get to be, say, eight to ten weeks old, you will hear them bark and can locate them easily. You can tell very easily the bark of the pups from the old one, as they have a squeaky voice and make little short barks, while the old one has a coarse long howl.

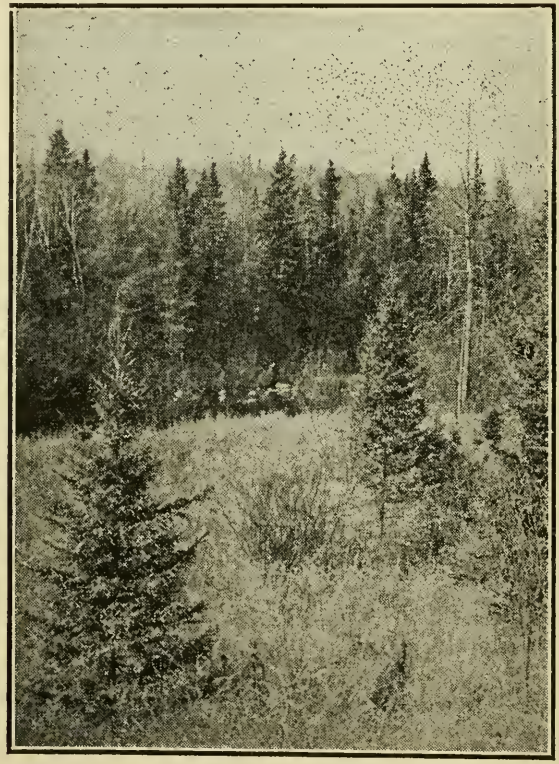
Now, some fellows will try to make you believe that any time you scare up a wolf or coyote, say anywhere from two hundred yards to a mile from her den, she will never go towards or near her den. Don't you believe any such stuff; I have seen both old she wolves and coyotes run right to and by their dens.

Sometime ago we were hunting a coyote den and saw the two old coyotes about half a mile away from where they had the pups, and when these old coyotes saw us, they both ran in a circle around us and went right over to where the pups were.

When an old coyote makes the regular long howls, she is generally about twice as far away as she sounds; but if she is barking at you like a dog does, she is likely only about half as far away as you think she is; and if she circles around you making short barks, you may be sure that you are near her pups. After you have located the den, if you can find a place near it where you can sit or lie down and be well hid and can stay for an hour or two, you often can get a good shot at the old one.

When hunting coyotes either on horseback or with a car and you see one at a distance, do not go directly toward it but keep circling around, drawing a little closer all the time. If you are on horseback, keep out of sight and just peep over a hill or knoll and watch the coyote until it goes over the next hill; then dig the spurs into your horse and get to where the coyote went over and you will likely get up to a good rifle

range. Sometimes the coyote will trot over the hill and the next five seconds come right back up and see you tearing across the prairie towards him. Then—well, you might as well turn around and call the deal off, unless you are in an airplane.



A Bit of Michigan Woodland

TRAPPING IN THE FAR NORTH

By Wallace R. Waters

AFTER the beginner is thoroughly posted on the fundamental rules of trapping and can make proper sets for the difficult animals, he has still much to learn before he is competent to run long lines of traps in the wilderness, or even hope to make a fair catch in any location where there are expert trappers in competition.

Let us see where some of his trouble lies. As a general rule the young trapper takes much more care with his sets than the more experienced man, yet does not get as good results from his traps. Why is this? He will take great pains to have his traps for mink, weasel, etc., in neat cubby houses, which will take considerable time to make. The bait will be well fastened back from the trap, possibly with wire; the trap will be clogged in the correct manner, placed firmly in position and carefully covered with a light layer of earth, leaves, etc., to match the surroundings, and when the set is completed it will be "letter perfect," according to the usual "Young Trapper's Guide." Everything will be in its proper place and it is impossible for the animal to reach the bait without passing over the trap. Still one of the most essential details in trapping has been overlooked. Not only is the set free for mink or other fur bearers, but it is at the mercy of all animals and birds that infest the trapper's lines.

Now how about the professional trapper or the Indians of the North? As he passes along the river banks with his traps and bag of bait, his eyes are searching the shores for natural sets, a hole in the bank, a crevice the rocks, a hollow under the roots of a fallen tree, a natural run over a narrow point and so on. In most cases his set is already made, except for a few details. He wedges the bait (usually fish) back as far as possible, the trap is set well in from the mouth of hole, hollow or crevice, loosely covered and clogged to a bushy sapling; then to complete the set, he throws a bunch of dry brush or twigs over the entrance and goes on his way, knowing that the chances of his traps being molested by rabbits,

squirrels, or whiskey-jacks (moose birds) are reduced to a minimum, while at the same time the brush will not hinder a mink or weasel from pushing its way into the set to investigate the bait. It is more natural also for a mink or weasel to find a portion of fish or other food cached in some dark corner than it is for it to find the same lying in a long, regular tunnel, open at one end to the light, where every Tom, Dick or Harry of the animal or bird world can see it. Fur bearing animals do not hunt by sight, but by scent.

While the loose brush or twigs will bar out whisky-jacks and squirrels, there are times when the snowshoe rabbits make light of such a flimsy barrier. Every few years they are practically wiped out by a plague peculiar to this one branch of the rabbit family; but as they increase in numbers at an enormous rate, a year or so previous to the plague they literally overrun the woods, and nothing is safe from their attack. The willows, poplars, young birch and nearly all soft woods are stripped clean of bark for several feet up; meat of any kind they eagerly devour and fish has a great attraction for them. They will scent out the bait in the various sets from considerable distances and unless special precautions are taken, you will find on the next visit over the lines the sets torn to pieces, no sign of the bait and in nearly every trap the remains of a rabbit. To counteract this state of affairs, our traps must be set farther back into the bait house and the entrance narrowed down to about two or three inches in diameter; then a rude lattice work should be made by roughly crossing dry sticks one over the other to protect the entrance; see that all the twigs are sloping well back toward the top of set. If they are left upright the rabbit will poke his nose into one of the small openings and with an upward jerk of the head uproot the whole works. Also bear in mind that dry twigs must be used, as the natural winter food of the rabbit is the bark of young willow, poplar, etc.

While there are other methods to suit various sets, in a general way the above methods are very satisfactory for mink or weasel and will work equally well for fisher and marten when ground sets are used, only everything should be on a slightly larger scale.

For lynx, however, we must vary the process. The usual method in the North is to build a corral or pen of dry sticks, say two feet six inches in diameter, the stakes sloping outward towards the top, and instead of using bait a small quantity of approved "Lynx Scent" is rubbed on a bunch of grass, which is tied to a stake and then placed near the back of the corral. A narrow opening is left in front for the trap or snare. If a snare is used it is tied to a small sapling, which is wedged in a more or less horizontal position between the side stakes and directly over the opening of the corral. The snare should be about eight inches in diameter and to keep it in position it is tied to the side stakes with blades of dry grass. If the grass is brittle, cut small nicks in the end stakes at a convenient height and slip the ends of the grass into them after getting snare neatly extended. The snare should hang about 15 inches from the snow level and the opening at the bottom must be filled in with twigs. This set is seldom disturbed by rabbits; but occasionally one will take a nip at the snare cord, so on every visit it is advisable to see that no strands have been severed in this way.

When a trap is used we are against the old proposition. Whiskey-jacks and squirrels will not bother, because a small, dry twig can be placed under the pan of trap to catch each side of the left jaw; this also works good on paper for rabbits, too, but from experience the smallest twig which will stand the strain of a healthy rabbit's jump will also support the weight of a small lynx; so to circumvent the rabbit and yet leave all clear for the lynx, we place our trap just inside the corral, drive a row of dry stakes (they should be at least six inches above the snow) in front, sloping inward, and at the back of the trap do the same, or stick two or three long twigs crosswise. This makes the trap a natural stepping place for the lynx to inspect closely the scent; but as a rabbit will seldom jump into a confined area amidst scrub, it leaves no room for his activities and consequently if the "medicine" is of the right odor, every lynx that passes should contribute a valuable skin to the trapper's pack.

The muskrat is one of the easiest of animals to trap, but unless the trapper goes at it in a systematic way it is also the

most disagreeable of all trapping. During the warm days of early April the land animals rapidly shed their winter coat of fur, and as soon as they show signs of "shedding" all traps should be lifted ready for the spring 'rat hunt. The creeks and rivers will not yet be free of ice, but the lake ice will still be firm and solid; so first of all we turn our attention to the 'rat houses and the feed beds on the swampy parts of the lake. There is a law against cutting 'rat houses in some provinces, but nevertheless it is still done. The house is cut open and the trap placed on the bed, then the hole should be carefully closed and a stake passed through the ring of the trap chain. The feed beds made by the 'rats after the ice has formed in the fall require a different method. As there is practically nothing whatever to hold a clog either a bushy clog (which the 'rat cannot pull down the small hole) must be used or one that is at least double the length of the trap chain to prevent the 'rat from jumping around on the ice and by getting the clog parallel with the chain, disappearing down his feed hole with the whole contrivance.

Now in setting the traps great care must be used, or the catch will be light. I find the No. 4 jumps are the very best of traps for all purposes; but especially do they shine at 'rat trapping. They occupy such a very small space and there are no long springs to get in the way of the 'rat's short legs. The traps are usually set at the edge of the hole, either just in the water, or dry on the small bed. There is one objection to this method, however. The nights are usually cold and a light skim of ice will form on the water, caking the trap, and when set on the bed the chances are that the trap will be sprung when the ice is being broken. To overcome this we hang our traps down the side of the hole below the water on the side that the rat usually makes its feeding ground; by so doing, there is no danger from frost and the 'rat, as it is coming up, placing its feet on the trap to get out of the water, and is caught, and immediately dives to drown in a few minutes. Even with the best of weather, if traps are set above water level, the percentage of "legs" caught will be considerable and a dead loss. Traps should be visited at least twice a day.

By the time the lake ice is unsafe the creeks and rivers will

be open and the swamps free of ice; then the shanty should be abandoned and the tent used. For open water trapping we find that 100 traps are all that two men can properly handle and care for the fur caught. We use a seven by nine tent, heated with a small box stove (folding) with telescope pipes. Our supplies are all in several bags, and to hold and carry cooked food we made a small box covered with oilcloth to keep contents dry. Our bedding, a bag of spare clothes, guns, tacks, stretching boards, two axes and a few odds and ends complete the outfit. We pitch tent, then set our traps, setting a trap in every likely place.

If possible, set so the 'rat will drown. If the water is not deep enough, or the bottom is frozen so that the stake cannot be driven in we set in about three inches of water, approaching the feed bed so as to catch the 'rat by the hind leg. A 'rat caught by the front foot in shallow water will twist off its leg in a few minutes. Sometimes they will do the same to the hind one, but this is unusual; though four years ago we caught a large 'rat with only one leg; the other three had been twisted off in traps.

In the evening we visit our traps, come home to camp and skin and stretch. Then in the morning we strike tent, load our outfit into our canoe and go over the line, lifting all traps. At the end we start setting again and continue until the last trap is set. Then we paddle to the nearest camping ground we can get, fix up the tent, etc., have our dinner, skin and dress the catch and visit the line again in the evening, staying out till late shooting 'rats with .22 rifles till it is too dark to shoot. Next morning lift all traps and reset on the opposite side of the camp ground and repeat the same work as yesterday.

By so doing we move camp every two days and are close to our work. No useless moves are made and no time is lost getting to the traps, because the line starts at the tenting ground and we find it possible to obtain a majority of the 'rats by one night's trapping if the traps are set and placed correctly; also there are always a few left and there is no danger of exterminating the animal in that neighborhood.

It may seem "a tall one" to say 'rats can be trapped out in

one night, but we have made lots of experiments to determine this and we find that when the first night's trapping with 100 traps will run 35 to 60 'rats, the second night's catch will be from 4 to 10 'rats.

I believe it is common in the settled districts to use various baits for muskrat trapping, but in the North we set chiefly on feed beds, and if any bait is used, it will be that the stake is a young green willow (do not use this where beavers are likely to roam) or a little of the musk may be smeared on the stake or clog. If one understands the habits of the animal it is not necessary to do even this.

Now to handle any quantity of 'rats every day in the proper manner is some job and only by coöperation can good results be obtained. My partner and I work together. I skin and stretch the fur and he does the fleshing. We use board stretchers and to dry the hides we hang a long stick just below the ridge pole of the tent on which we suspend our stretchers by means of a short length of twine. The hides are left on the boards 24 hours, then taken off, bunched loosely on a string and hung at the back of the tent for two days, so the thicker parts of the nose, ears, etc., will thoroughly dry and harden. After this process we bale them in lots of twenty-five, pressing them between two heavy boards and making the bale secure with three cross-tie strings. When the trapping is over, the bales are bunched again in fours and fastened with cotton cord, and for the canoe trip home they are securely sewn in sacks 400 'rats to a sack, which will make a bale of about 64 pounds in weight. This is convenient to handle on portages and packs much better in the canoe than a large bundle.

In conclusion I would strongly impress upon the minds of the readers the necessity of seeing that the fur is kept good and dry. No matter how well handled fur may be, if it gets wet the hides will mildew. Also see that everything is baled to prevent crumpling. A good appearance means dollars and cents to the trapper when his furs reach the market.

A YEAR IN ALASKA

By G. A. Pease

PART I

A NUMBER of years ago, before that country was as well known as it now is, Pard and myself started on a prospecting trip into the interior of Alaska. I will not attempt to give a full description of all our trials and tribulations on our way in, buying outfits, passage on ship, etc., as it has all been described many times. Will also omit the details of the climb over Chilcat Pass; getting our outfit over and down to Lake Bennett, whipsawing lumber, building boat, all of which is hard work. Then we went across Bennett, down Whitehorse river, through Whitehorse Rapids to Lake Lebarge, across it, down Thirty-mile and Lewis, through Five Finger Rapids and on down the Yukon to Forty-mile river. Then up Forty-mile about seventy-five miles (through rapids too numerous to mention) where we decided to locate our main, or home camp, same being about one hundred miles west of where Dawson City now stands.

We built a good comfortable log cabin, fourteen by sixteen. By the way, it may interest some of the readers to learn how a prospector builds a log house in the Far North. First, and a most important point, if possible, is to select a building spot close to where the logs will be cut, so it saves much hard work moving the logs, which of course must be done by hand.

After cutting the logs in lengths to make the desired size house and getting as level a start as possible, lay the first round of logs. Then from the hillside or "tundra" cut the moss into strips about one foot wide. Loosen with a shovel and roll up into rolls. Carry to cabin and unroll a layer of moss on the top of the first round of logs getting it as even in thickness as possible. Notch and lay next round of logs on top of the moss and repeat to desired height. With a sharp axe trim moss off smooth inside and out. Carry gables up same way. Cut out door and small windows. Having no glass, we used flour sacks dipped in melted candles for lights.

For the roof, a layer of split poles, with a good thick layer of moss (we had two feet on ours), then just enough dirt to make it shed water in good shape. And such a cabin will be found comfortable on the many days when the "quick" is frozen solid. Of course one can fix up the inside according to his own taste, as to floor, table, bunks, chairs, shelves, etc.; 'tis only a matter of time and inclination. One thing which must not be overlooked is a ventilator in the roof six inches square, as a cabin so built is too nearly airtight to be healthy without one. We prospected the bars along the river and found colors most everywhere and some fair pay dirt. Those days less than an ounce a day to the shovel (man) was not considered much good. An ounce of the gold of that part of the country, was taken in payment for goods at the trading post at $16.50; outside value $17.40 at any United States assay office, so the company made 90 cents profit on every ounce of dust, besides their profit on the goods, and am sure that was not a small one, so you see they were "double shooting the turn," so to speak. No wonder they got rich. However will say that we (the same as other prospectors) worked hard many days for less than an ounce of gold. We used a rocker to separate the gold from the gravel, a slow and primitive method.

If we had confined our operations to the bars of Forty-mile we would have done fairly well. But hoping as all prospectors do, to make a big strike on some of the creeks, we spent much time putting down holes to bed rock through the frozen ground. "Burning," it is called. The gravel must be thawed with wood fires, which is slow work.

Winter was near now, so we gathered a good supply of blueberries, and cranberries to freeze for winter use. By the way, while speaking of berries, that country has any I was ever in "skinned a mile."

Berries everywhere, miles of them. Two kinds of currants, red and black; raspberries, blueberries, cranberries, and several other kinds we did not know by name, but all good eating. This is the time of the year and bears have an easy time and get fat.

October 1st, when the river froze over, we got out the poke,

weighed up and found we had only about forty-two ounces. The next thing on the program was a trip down to the trading post for mail and some supplies. We found we were going to be short on some articles. To decide who was elected for the trip, we played a series of five games of crib. Having the luck with me, Pard was it, elected to make the one hundred-mile mush with the malamutes (dogs), while I fixed things up snug for winter, cut a big pile of wood, overhauled traps, etc., to have all in readiness to go after the furs in real earnest when Pard returned. Incidentally I found time to catch some three hundred pounds of fish, mostly grayling, a very beautiful and gamy fish. They resemble the trout somewhat; the meat is white, fine grained and flavored. The whitefish and ling we used for bait and dog feed.

Pard was due now to show up any day; but expected him to be a few days late, as it is hard traveling on the ice at this time of year. The river just frozen, is apt to overflow in places. Water on top of the ice, flooding and freezing, makes the going hard and slow. I had most of the chores done and as we needed fresh meat (a light fall of snow came just at this time) I thought I would try to get some. I left a note for Pard on the table, that he might know where I was, made a pack of my robe and blanket, a little grub, a bunch of cartridges for the old .45-90 Winchester, shouldered the gun and struck out across the hills towards the head of Indian Creek, where I knew moose and very likely caribou would be found. The snow lay on the ground about four or five inches deep, and fresh, just right for good tracking, therefore I had good reasons for my hopes of getting game.

The going was not so easy with the soft snow covering the steep hills, fallen timbers and the "niggerhead" flats, or tundra. By the way, those same niggerheads are about the hardest things to mush over I ever struck. They are a kind of grass that grows on the flats. They grow up from a central stem, the long grass leaves growing out and drooping down on all sides like long hair. The top is round; the whole plant is from one to two feet high and as wide across the top. If one does not step exactly in the center, over the main stem, the onery thing will tilt sideways and down you go. When

one of these flats have been burnt over by fire, leaving only the round, black balls on the thick stems they surely do look like a lot of niggerheads. Think likely that is how the name niggerhead happened to be applied.

The days were getting pretty short now and along about three o'clock, dusk coming on, and being tired, having made about eighteen miles, also being in the edge of the country where I expected to find game, I made camp, prepared my supper and washed it down with good hot tea. Then I "hit the hay" or may be I should say boughs, from the fir tree. They beat hay all hollow. (Oblivion until morning.)

Breakfast over, and on my way as soon as light enough to see to travel. During the next two hours I crossed trails of two moose and saw where a bunch of about fifteen caribou crossed over the ridge to the head of Indian Creek. Leaving my pack cached in a small tree near the head of a small "pup" (a small creek) which went tumbling noisily down a steep gulch to the main creek. (The creeks not having frozen dry yet). I struck out for a small lake a mile or more away, expecting to find game near there and was not mistaken, as will be seen. There was plenty of good cover willows, birch, alders and some evergreens. About three hundred yards from the lake I struck the trail of a small bunch of caribou. Having the wind in my favor, I started to follow them, going very carefully, as the trail was fresh. It led me across a flat where, after feeding about some on the moss, they went into a patch of thick brush on a small hill. Thinking they were apt to stop in the brush, I circled around and came up across the wind. When about half way up the hill I caught a glimpse of something moving in the brush some two hundred yards farther around the hill and knew I had the game located and started to try and get nearer, as the brush was very thick there. It interfered so I could not see well enough to shoot. Right here let me say, I was out for meat, not for sport. A long, hard winter was at hand, therefore, I wanted to get near enough to place my shots as surely as possible. Every cartridge counts and is worth near its weight in gold when one is so far from anywhere.

Think I was all of half an hour working my way one hun-

dred yards nearer where I had seen the game, to a big rock. Raising my head carefully to take a peep, I was much surprised to see four caribou not more than twenty yards away in the edge of a small park, two standing, two lying down, and seven more about fifty yards away, most of them also lying down. Said I to myself, "Pard, here is our winter's meat; a nice little bunch just made to order for us." Swinging the old .45-90 into line, I drew a bead on the one nearest to me. It was standing (could hardly bring myself to shoot one lying down). I placed a ball through his heart. He promptly laid down for keeps. The others sprang up and bunched in the center of the park and I was the busy boy with the lever, sights and trigger for the next few seconds. When the smoke cleared (and this is not just a figure of speech) I found five dead caribou in the little park, one dying in the edge of the brush, shot through the neck, and one with his back broken. I soon ended his suffering.

Then I circled for the trails of any that might be crippled, as I was sure more of them must be hit, and sure enough, found three blood trails. I followed the first about two hundred yards to a fine buck shot near the heart; the second not quite so far to a doe, not dead, but unable to get up.

The third went a mile or more; did not find much blood on the trail; was afraid I was elected for a long chase. However, soon came to where it had laid down. A spot of blood in the snow told me it was shot through pretty well back. Knowing it was pretty sick and would lie down again soon, I took my time, going carefully. Sure enough, I soon jumped him. A good running shot at about one hundred yards and the hunt was over for the day.

By working hard I had the game all dressed (not skinned) and cached on a platform in the timber, out of reach of varmints, in time to get back to where I had left my pack, sometime before dark. A big feed of fresh liver and bacon, a pipe of good old "Westover" and a tired, but well satisfied man "turned in." So ended a day I will never forget, for several reasons. First, I had succeeded in getting a good bunch of meat quickly and easily, when badly needed; enough to last until spring by not wasting any and using rabbits to

help out with the dog feed and bait for traps, when we could get them. Second, there were eleven caribou in the bunch, the old .45-90, with full magazine, held ten shots. She spoke ten times and killed or mortally wounded ten caribou. Of course they were very close, but it was fast work, and the wonder is, that in the confusion each bullet should find a separate mark.

I am not telling this story of the hunt because I am proud of a big kill. We needed it all and more. It was a matter of business with me. It takes some meat to feed six big dogs and two men for seven or eight months and it is always better to have some to give away or sell, than not to have enough. Later in the season it is very hard to get any big game in that country.

Next morning I started out to try and get a moose, to have a little variety of meat. Moose is more like beef and not so dry when cooked as deer, sheep, elk, antelope, etc. To my notion moose is the best of all, also the Alaska moose is the most alert and cunning of them all, white tail deer not excepted. I believe a moose can wind a man a mile or more. Their hearing is very acute and eyes very keen and they do not fail to use all their senses to protect themselves.

Whenever I outwit a moose on a still hunt (without calling) I feel as though I have accomplished something worth while. However, this was not to be my lucky day with moose, although I found several trails. None of them were very fresh. I also saw plenty of caribou and some marten signs. Tomorrow I must mush to camp. Pard surely will be back by this time.

The early morning saw me on my way, down a long ridge partly covered with evergreen timber. The going was good, so made good time for about seven or eight miles, when on crossing a flat some two or more miles wide, near the center, I struck the trail of three moose. By the tracks I judged them to be a bull and a cow, with a yearling calf. The trail was fresh, therefore thought I would follow it, as they were going in a direction which would not take me far out of my way. I followed the trail an hour or more, when I found where they had turned down into the head of a ravine or draw, quite wide and flat, with a thick growth of young birch

along one side. Keeping on down the ridge about a mile, I left the pack and went down into the gulch to crosscut the trail and find out if the game had, as I supposed, stopped in the birch brush at the head of the draw. After crossing the gulch and finding no tracks, I was satisfied the moose were in the gulch above me. I started up to try and get a shot, working my way slowly up, being very careful to keep in cover and made no noise, also using all my senses to try and locate Mr. and Mrs. Moose before they located me. I came to an open stretch of ground with no brush for cover about two hundred yards across, without seeing tracks or game.

I was standing in the edge of the brush, wondering how I was going to get across the open space without jumping the game, when out of the young birch thicket on the opposite side walked the bull, head up, looking up towards the ridge. I flashed a glance to see what had attracted his attention and saw standing on the ridge outlined against the sky a lone wolf. The bull had evidently winded it and was watching. I was about two hundred yards from the bull. A better chance no one could ask for. Resting my rifle against a small tree, I drew a bead on his shoulder, pulled the trigger and down he went. But he was up again in an instant. I fired two more shots quickly. He made one jump, a few staggering steps and went down to stay.

Glancing up at the ridge, I was surprised to see the wolf still there. Thinking to give him a good start, I turned loose two shots at him. The range was about three hundred yards. He disappeared. Meantime the cow and calf went crashing through the brush up the draw; never had a sight of them. Did not want any more, anyhow.

Going over to where the bull lay I dressed and quartered him for easier handling. Found that all three shots had scored, two in the shoulders, and one farther back. Any one of the three would have killed. This was the easiest kill I ever made still hunting moose. But some credit belongs to the wolf; he helped very much by attracting the bull's attention. I soon cached the meat in some trees, out of reach of Mr. Wolf or any member of his family which chanced that way.

The wolf was still in my mind, so went over to see what

became of him. This was another of my lucky days, I guess, as Mr. Wolf was waiting for me on the ridge, dead. A hole clear through him. His pelt was soon off and went to where I left my pack. I added the wolf skin and moose liver to it. A good hearty meal of coffee, liver, bacon and cold bannock and I was once more on my way.

By steady plugging along and making a long day of it I arrived at the home camp all O. K. Believe me, that little old log cabin, with a light in the window telling me Pard was home, looked good to me.

Pard said he was glad to see me back. I told him the feeling was mutual, so to let it go double. Supper over, we had the big talk. Each of us had our story to tell of our trip; Pard of what he had heard and seen of news from the outside; I of the hunt.

After two days' resting, feasting on letters from home, newspapers and magazines from three to six months old, but new to us, we were again in the harness, with plenty of work to do, laying out our trap lines, fixing up line camps, distributing traps, grub, bait, dog feed, etc. The snow being deep enough for good sledding, we went to Indian Creek and brought our meat in, four trips being required to land it all at home. The meat was frozen solid and would stay so until spring, as I never knew it to thaw the least bit in that country during the winter.

Well, old Winter, we are ready for you. 'Tis well that we are, as he waits for no one and deals hard blows at the unprepared. He is here now in all of his strength and glory and to stay until the last of April or the first of May.

PART II

My daily record shows snow eighteen inches deep on the level and mercury frozen solid December 4th. We had built a good shed for our furs and a warm log dog house, long enough for our six dogs, four malamutes, and two McKenzie Huskies. "Fanny" (a black Husky), our leader, was one of the best and most willing dogs in harness that I ever saw. She was not large, about seventy pounds, and to give my readers who have no experience working dogs some idea of

the strength of these half-wolf dogs and the load a good one will pull on a hard trail, will tell of the load we put behind "Fanny" one day as a test.

We were working about half a mile from camp and had her with us to haul some tools home on the sled at quitting time. We loaded the tools, a rocker, weight some fifty pounds; two picks, two shovels, two gold pans, an axe and a panning tub. Pard, who weighs one hundred and sixty-five, climbed on and yelled "Mush." I gave a push to start the sled, then added my one hundred and fifty pounds to the load. Am positive there were more than four hundred pounds besides the sled, which would go about forty pounds. The trail was good and hard, slightly down-grade for one hundred feet or so, then dead level to near camp, where there was a slight up-grade to the house. By the time we struck the level stretch Fanny was going on a keen run. She landed us at the cabin door in short order, without the use of whip or cuss words, which, by the way, we never used on her. You will say, "Some load that, for one small dog," and 'tis true, there are not many dogs like her.

We did not expect to trap much of anything in the fur line except marten, lynx, wolf, fox, fisher and wolverine. In fact, there was but little other furs in that part of the country, except bear, and some "bobs." No beavers, muskrat, otter, and very few mink.

I have been wondering again, getting ahead of my story. Must go back to the early days of November, which found us out on the trap lines building dead falls, setting traps, etc. We each had arranged our lines to suit ourselves, starting from home camp, working in a rough circle, back home, with five line camps a fair day's travel apart, aiming to be back home every sixth day, rest over Sunday, then hike again. Pard's line was some longer than mine. He also had out more traps. He was stronger on the trail than I. We both had out all the traps we could handle.

I hoped to overcome his advantage in that line and take as much fur, as I was more experienced with the traps. But he fooled me, or luck was against me, as results will show.

I will not attempt to tell you all of the ups and downs, the

good and bad luck of the winter's trapping. Will just pick a few of the most interesting days, and describe the incidents as best I can from memory, assisted by one of my old note books. I have for years made it a practice to make notes in a small book of the most interesting happenings each day.

We had fairly good luck right from the start, especially with marten. There were plenty of them. Wolves were scarce; but we did not care, as their pelts were too heavy for us to take many out. We were mainly after the smaller and more valuable skins.

December 14th was my best day of the season. I spent the night in one of my line camps about twenty miles from home. Started in the morning as soon as it was light enough to travel. The first three traps I came to were empty. The next was sprung by a bunch of snow falling from a tree into it and I was beginning to think this was not my day for luck. Then I found the next trap robbed of a marten by a wolverine. My spirits rose some at the sight of a fine dark marten in the next trap. By noon I had four marten and two lynx. Then I ate lunch under some overhanging rocks, where I had some dry wood stored. One had to have a fire to thaw and warm the lunch and make a can of tea or coffee. After the lunch was placed where it would do the most good, I hurried on my way, as the days were very short now. In fact, the sun did not get high enough to be seen, from the valleys, or low hills. But I could see it shining on the high mountains for a short time.

My route now was across a kind of table land, heavily timbered, a fine country for marten. Three, all dark, were added to the day's catch and placed on the sled. Pard and I each used a sled and three dogs on the line.

About two hours after lunch the big event came off. I dropped down into a small gulch where I had three fox sets. In one of them was a fine dark silver gray, the beautiful silky fur showing no "brass." Believe me, I was a tickled trapper, as this was my first silver. Many trappers never have the luck to get one, so I had good reason to be pleased. So ended the day. A tired but happy man pulled into his line

camp that night and could hardly wait until next evening to tell the news to Pard, and show him the furs.

Next day I picked up two marten, one lynx, a fisher and a wolverine. The latter I was very glad to get, because, aside from the value of his pelt, they are great trap robbers and destroy many of the smaller fur bearers.

When I reached the home camp with a well loaded sled Pard was there and had supper ready. Although good and hungry, we could not eat until we had admired and appraised the silver. Pard said the fox skin "belonged to him by rights, as he saw him first." (Having jumped him earlier in the season.) I told him we would split, fifty-fifty, if he would make some of his famous Blueberry Short-cake for Sunday dinner. Pard is quite a josher and I try to get back at him. Well, we kept busy all of the time, with some good and some other kind of luck. Taken as a whole, we were doing first rate.

As the season wore away we began to plan for the bear campaign of early spring. Our store room was showing a fine collection of furs. We were feeling pretty well satisfied with the reward of our work, and the world in general.

Pard said he was hungry for some bear meat. He had found where one had holed up for the winter, about six miles from camp and suggested that we go and get it. I seconded the motion. Therefore, next morning, we struck out and in due time arrived at the den, which in this case was under the roots of a large fir tree that the place for bruin to take his long sleep. You see, in this land, where the soil is frozen no one knows how deep, the roots of the trees cannot go down into the ground, therefore they spread out flat on, or very near the surface, under the moss. Such being the case, they blow over rather easily, pulling the moss up for yards around like a great blanket a foot or so in thickness and very dense. This was hanging from the upturned roots, forms very good dens for wild animals, especially in winter, when the deep snow helps to make it warmer.

Well, we soon located the entrance to the den, kicked and shoveled the snow out of it with our snowshoes and tried to see in and locate his "bearship" for a chance to shoot. But

it was too dark inside to see anything. I climbed up on top with my axe to cut a hole for light, cleaned the snow and was chopping away at the roots and moss, when without any warning whatever the moss gave way under my feet and down I went into the den.

The drop was not far, seven or eight feet. But let me say right here, I did a lot of thinking on the way down. They were not calm and pleasant thoughts, either. I dropped straight down and landed on my feet, also on the bear. But believe me, I did not stay there long. Bruin gave a grunt and a "woof." I gave a yell, and dived head first for the entrance of the den, as the idea of being roommates with a bear did not appeal to me. It struck me that the den was too small for both of us, so I would go, while the going was good. Neither did I stop to say good-bye. It seemed to me I was a long time getting out to daylight, but do not believe the real time was more than two or three seconds. Pard said I came out like I was scared; but of course I was not (?). He also said he had always considered a mink or a weasel the quickest thing alive at dodging in and out of holes, but that I had them skinned a mile.

Finding I was not hurt, Pard had a good laugh. Maybe I smiled, too. But it was only on the surface. Inside there was a shaky, gone kind of a feeling and my legs did not seem as strong as usual. But I took a brace and asked Pard where the bear went. He roared again and said, "Why, you didn't bring him out; he is still in the den." I remarked that it was his bear, anyhow, by right of discovery and I would not think of depriving him of the honor. We edged up to the entrance of the den carefully and looked in. The hole I had broken in the top to let in light enough so we could see fairly well.

There lay the bear, curled up in his nest; do not believe he had moved. But his eyes were open. I said to Pard, "I have gotten him awake; now you go in and get him." Pard thought it best to send in his card first, which he did, in the shape of a soft-nosed bullet, making a bull's-eye, or perhaps I should say a bear's-eye, as he hit him in the eye, and it was all over but a few kicks. Well, we had bear meat all right. It was

good, fat, tender and juicy. Have eaten bear many times, but that one killed in his den was the best of all. Still I would not care to go through the same experience to get another.

The sun was coming back, the days getting longer and we would soon be having soft weather. Therefore we put in our best licks on the line, taking some fur right along until the soft weather started, when we pulled our traps and spent a few days getting them all to home camp. We expected to get a few bear now to finish out the trapping of the season. We were not very successful, as we only managed to get nine, two of them small (yearlings). We had no very exciting adventures in killing any of them.

With the one killed in the den we had ten bear hides to add to the collection of furs in our cache. The bunch looked good to us: 10 bears, 17 wolf, 41 lynx, 214 marten, 8 fisher, 3 wolverine, 12 mink, 21 fox, 1 silver, 4 cross. I have trapped many seasons, sometimes alone, but more often with a partner. But that was the best bunch of furs I ever helped take. If prices those days were as high as they have been the past few years, we would have had a nice little stake. As it was, we were well paid for our year's work. Besides we enjoyed the clean, outdoor life, in the woods and hills, the only life that has ever given me complete satisfaction, good health and a feeling of freedom with plenty of elbow room. When in a large city it always seems crowded to me. In fact, to my notion the most lonesome place of all is a big town, where one is a stranger.

We baled our furs, packed up traps, etc., overhauled our boat to be ready to go out as soon as the waters started to flow. The smaller rivers and creeks freeze dry in this country. There are no springs. The water to supply the streams comes from rain, melting snow and ice. They rise and fall very rapidly. Have known the Forty-mile to raise twelve feet in twenty-four hours after a heavy rain. The frozen ground will not absorb the rain water, therefore after the moss is saturated it must drain off into the streams.

The soft weather in the spring starts all of the small streams to flowing first. They join the rivers, where the water runs

over the top of the old ice, as it is frozen to the bottom. After a few days this ice raises and then comes some real ice gorges, as the ice is from four to six feet thick. Soon the ice is all carried away. Then travel by boat is resumed. The streams of Alaska are the highways, traveled by boat in summer and sleighs in winter.

We were all ready to go when the rivers opened. The breakup that year came May 9th. Our boat was a "double-ender" (pointed at both ends), twenty-six feet long. We loaded all of our outfit, lashed the most valuable bales securely in case of accident, bid good-bye to the old home camp with feelings of real regret, called the dogs and saw that they were in the space reserved for them. Pard was at the oars, I with a broad paddle in the back end of the boat to paddle, and at the same time guide the boat. In the easy water we would just paddle along without exerting ourselves; but in the bad water we would put all our strength to oars and paddle, as the boat must be going faster than the water to give it steerage way to avoid the rocks, of which there were plenty.

We had a dozen or so of rapids to run, some of them quite rough and dangerous.

I am not going to give the details of our trip down the rivers. We "lined" the canyon safely, arrived at the Port on the Yukon, where we disposed of our furs at a good figure for those days, as they were all prime, well handled pelts. We also sold our dogs, as we did not want to take them out with us. Then on down the mighty Yukon (which in one place, the Yukon flats, is said to be fifty miles wide), rowing, paddling, drifting and sailing when the wind was favorable, stopping here and there for short side trips, prospecting. We landed in due time at the sea. Fortunately we had to wait only a few days for a ship to sail for home.

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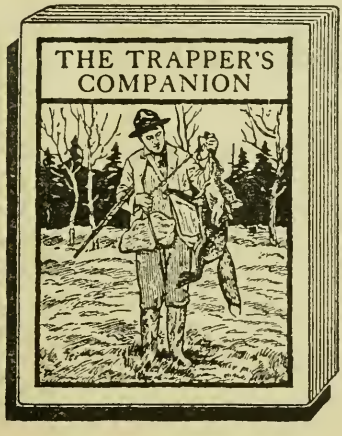

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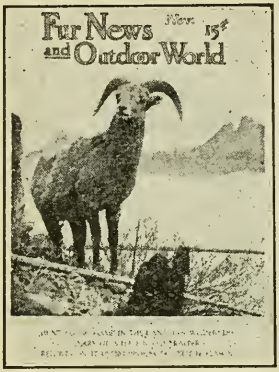

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